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IBC WORLD NEWS
CH ABC
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Japan's Takaichi set to secure big majority in lower house P8

UIDAI crosses 1-cr schoolchildren biometric updates P9

P12 Gambhir hails Suryakumar's masterclass in win

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India-Malaysia Tamil connect gets a boost

Modi says India-Malaysia connected by 'shared affection' for Tamil; mentions Ibrahim's admiration for Tamil actor MGR

KUALA LUMPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that India and Malaysia are connected by a shared affection for the Tamil, underlining the strong presence of the language in education, media, and cultural life in the country.

Malaysia is home to nearly three million people of Indian descent, the second largest in the world, with an overwhelming majority of Tamil origin.

"India and Malaysia are also connected by a shared affection for the Tamil language. In Malaysia, the strong and vibrant presence of Tamil is visible in education, media, and cultural life," PM Modi said while speaking to the media.

"I am confident that today's audio-visual agreement will bring our hearts even closer through films and music, especially Tamil cinema," Modi added.

Earlier in the day, PM Modi pointed out that his Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim is a "big fan" of MGR, just like "several of us in India", as a song from the Tamil actor's movie Naalai Namathe was presented during a lunch hosted for the Indian leader.

Modi also said that the Indian diaspora continues to serve as a strong bridge between India and Malaysia. He said that, inspired by this history, India had established the Thiruvalluvar Chair at the University of Malaya and would now set up a Thiruvalluvar centre to further strengthen shared heritage.

'No double standards on terrorism'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday delivered a strong message on India's approach to terrorism in his speech in Malaysia, asserting that there can be no ambiguity or selective standards in tackling the threat. Speaking after talks with Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Modi said India's position is unequivocal, stressing that the fight against terrorism allows "no double standards, no compromise." India and Malaysia on Sunday unveiled a series of initiatives to deepen cooperation across defence and security, semiconductors and trade, following wide-ranging talks between PM Modi and his Malaysian counterpart in Kuala Lumpur. "We will also make defence cooperation more comprehensive," the Prime Minister said.

'Indo-Pacific, a centre to global growth'

The PM also outlined India's approach to the Indo-Pacific, describing the region as central to global growth. "The Indo-Pacific region is emerging as the growth engine of the world," Modi said, adding that India remains committed to development, peace and stability across the region in partnership.

A 'special relationship' rooted in history

Modi described ties between the two countries as a "special relationship", pointing to deep historical and people-to-people links. "India and Malaysia share a special relationship. We are maritime neighbours. For centuries, our people have had deep and affectionate ties," he said.

$500 bn US imports in 5 years 'no problem': Goyal

NEW DELHI

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on Sunday said India would have no difficulty purchasing goods worth $500 billion from the United States over the next five years, calling the figure conservative given the country's expanding import demand and economic growth.

Speaking after India and the US finalised the framework for the first phase of a bilateral trade agreement, Goyal said India's growing economy would generate import demand of nearly $2 trillion over the same period.

"We are even today importing 300 billion dollars of goods that can be imported from the US. We are importing from all over the world. That is going to grow up to two trillion in the next five years... I told my counterparts that look, I can assure you that there is demand in India, but you have to be competitive," Goyal asserted.

A joint statement issued on Saturday said India had expressed its intention to purchase $500 billion worth of US energy products, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, technology products and coking coal over the next five years.

Goyal said India could already source imports worth about $300 billion from the US that it currently purchases from other countries.

He said large investments announced by global technology firms would drive further demand. "My sense is that we will see 10 gigawatts of data centres" in India, he said, adding that the equipment required for such facilities could be supplied by the US.

Asked whether the $500 billion purchase plan included existing orders, including aircraft deals, Goyal said: "Everything that we are talking about is in continuation and includes what we already are purchasing."

"We are going to need aircraft. We are going to need engines for aircraft. We are going to need spare parts. We already have $50 billion worth of orders on Boeing alone for aircraft. We have orders for engines," Goyal said.

He added that aviation imports alone could exceed $100 billion over the next five years, alongside purchases of oil, LNG, LPG and crude oil.

Goyal said India is negotiating deals from a position of strength, citing a future $35 trillion market, and noted it already imports $45–50 billion of US goods that it does not produce.

'Buying oil from US is in India's strategic interests'

India's plan to buy crude oil, LNG and LPG from the United States is driven by strategic energy diversification rather than any obligation under the proposed bilateral trade agreement, Goyal said, underlining that purchasing decisions will continue to rest with Indian companies.

"The buying of crude oil or LNG, LPG from the US is in India's own strategic interests as we diversify our oil sources. But the decisions are taken by the buyers, by the companies themselves. So, the trade deal doesn't discuss who will buy what and from where," he said. He added that the purpose of the trade agreement was to ensure a smooth pathway for trade and provide preferential market access, rather than dictate sourcing choices.

PREFERENTIAL EDGE

Goyal said free trade agreements were fundamentally about gaining an edge over competitors. "FTAs are all about preferential access vis-a-vis your competition. So, today when we got an 18% reciprocal tariff, we have a preference over other developing nations who are usually our competition," he said, adding that such tariff treatment makes trade agreements attractive and beneficial for long-term growth.

Indian refiners avoid Russian oil in push for US trade deal: sources

Indian refiners are reportedly avoiding Russian oil purchases for delivery in April and are expected to stay away from such trades for longer, refining and trade sources said, a move that could help New Delhi seal a trade pact with Washington. The US and India moved closer to a trade pact on Friday, announcing a framework for a deal they hope to conclude by March that would lower tariffs and deepen economic cooperation. Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum, and Reliance Industries are not accepting offers from traders for Russian oil loading in March and April, said a trader who approached the refiners. These refiners, however, had already scheduled some deliveries of Russian oil in March, refining sources said. Most other refiners have stopped buying Russian crude, sources added.

'ABSOLUTE NONSENSE': GOYAL ON OPPN'S ALLEGATIONS

Responding to a question on allegations of the deal being an effort of surrendering the nation's sovereignty, Goyal said that the deal is a labour of love, and the ones who are spreading this perspective are "pretty ignorant". He termed the allegations as "absolute nonsense".

Modi should step down for 'harming' India's sovereignty

BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has harmed India's sovereignty and weakened the farmers' livelihood by signing the trade deal with the US and demanded he step down.

"A Prime Minister who exposes the nation to pressure, weakens farmers' livelihoods, and damages India's dignity cannot continue in office. For the harm caused to India's sovereignty and self-respect, 'compromised' PM Narendra Modi must take responsibility and immediately resign," Siddaramaiah said in a post on 'X'.

According to him, the interim trade deal announced by Modi and US President Donald Trump did not come from equal and fair negotiations.

It followed "tariff threats, pressure tactics, and public warnings" by the United States on India's trade and energy choices and yielding under such pressure is not diplomacy but "surrender", he charged.

"By accepting these terms, Narendra Modi has weakened India's independence and lowered the country's standing in the world," he alleged.

Siddaramaiah said the framework is deeply unfair because the US will continue to impose tariffs of around 18 per cent on Indian goods, while India is being pushed to reduce tariffs on American goods to zero and remove other barriers.

He added that there are claims that India will import American goods worth USD 500 billion. US leaders have openly said this framework will benefit American farmers and rural America.

"At the same time, Indian agriculture stands to lose heavily. Indian farmers will be forced to compete with cheap, subsidised American farm products, threatening the livelihoods of 72 crore farmers and farm labourers. This is not free trade. It is economic coercion."

US MILITARY DEPLOYMENT DOES NOT SCARE US: IRAN DEFIES US PRESSURE

DUBAI

The latest round of US–Iran nuclear talks risks sliding from diplomacy back toward confrontation, as Tehran draws a firm red line on uranium enrichment and shrugs off Washington's growing military presence in the region.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran would never give up enrichment, insisting that US military deployments — including an aircraft carrier strike group — would not intimidate the Islamic republic. His remarks came days after Iran and the United States resumed talks in Oman for the first time in years, even as sanctions, tariff threats and military pressure continue to shadow the negotiations.

"Why do we insist on enrichment and refuse to give it up, even if war is imposed on us?" Araghchi said at a forum in Tehran attended by Agence France-Presse. "Because no one has the right to dictate our behaviour."

He dismissed US military deployments — including the arrival of the USS Abraham Lincoln strike group in the Arabian Sea — saying: "Their military deployment in the region does not scare us."

TALKS RESUME, TRUST REMAINS THIN

The comments came just days after Iran and the United States reopened talks in Oman — their first in years — aimed at reviving negotiations over Tehran's nuclear programme. Iran is seeking the lifting of US sanctions, while Washington wants strict limits on enrichment. Araghchi questioned Washington's seriousness, pointing to the continuation of sanctions, tariff threats and military pressure even as talks resumed

'India must get rid of communist ideology'

RAIPUR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the country needs to get rid of the "destructive" communist ideology at the earliest and appealed to Naxalites to lay down their arms, assuring them a red carpet from the government.

Addressing a conclave, titled 'Chhattsiagrh@25Shifting The Lens of Organiser Weekly in Nava Raipur, Shah said the Maoist problem cannot be linked to the lack of development or considered merely as a law-and-order issue.

"Left-Wing Extremism is an ideology-driven challenge," he added. Shah said the people of India should understand the truth of this ideology.

"Wherever communists remained in power, they could not bring development. Communist ideology is an ideology indicative of destruction, and the country is required to get rid of it immediately," he added.

Shah said the communist ideology is no longer present in democratic politics.

"It does not exist in Tripura and Bengal. In Kerala, it is surviving to an extent; however, people have started the change from Thiruvananthapuram," he added.

Shah appealed to Maoists to lay down their arms, saying the government doesn't want to fire a single bullet and will welcome those who surrender "with a red carpet".

Bengaluru Metro fare hike put on hold

BENGALURU

Namma Metro has temporarily put on hold the 5 per cent fare hike, which was slated to come into effect on Monday.

In a statement, Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) said the hike has been kept on hold until further orders. The decision on revised fares will be communicated after a review by the board, it added.

While the BMRCL did not specify the reasons for deferring the hike, well-placed sources said the decision was taken following directions from the Union government.

QUICK READ

BJP will form next govt in Bengal after polls in April: Adhikari

KOLKATA

Senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari on Sunday claimed that the party would secure a two-thirds majority in the next West Bengal Assembly elections and form the government by April, ending the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress' 15-year rule. Addressing a rally in Birbhum district, Adhikari said the electorate had made up its mind and asserted that the TMC would suffer a decisive defeat across both north and south Bengal. He alleged that the ruling party would no longer be able to "terrorise voters" or resort to proxy voting, claiming that the deletion of names of "fake voters" following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls had curtailed such practices.

Japan's Sanae Takaichi set for major lower house victory

TOKYO

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's coalition appeared headed to secure a big majority in the nation's lower house in an election on Sunday, exit polls indicated. Takaichi's Liberal Democratic Party is set to win 274 to 328 of the 465 seats in the chamber, well above the 233 needed for a majority, according to public broadcaster NHK. "We have consistently stressed the importance of responsible and proactive fiscal policy," Takaichi told reporters after media projections showed her party triumphing in the snap lower house election. "We will prioritise the sustainability of fiscal policy. We will ensure necessary investments."

STRAIGHT TALK

RSS brought 'acche din' for BJP: Bhagwat

MUMBAI

In a weighty statement, RSS chief Dr Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday said the Sangh had played a role in bringing 'acche din' for the BJP and not the other way round even as he praised the ruling political party on multiple issues, including building of the grand Ram Temple and change in the security scenario of India. Besides, he asked Indians not to nurture any fear of partition in the years ahead, but imagine the rise of Akhand Bharat in 2047.

'UCC should be framed with consensus'

On the Uniform Civil Code, the RSS chief said the law should be framed by taking everyone into confidence and must not lead to divisions in the society. "It shouldn't create divisions. In Uttarakhand, three lakh suggestions were made and after talking to all stakeholders, the act was passed," he said.

'I will step down the day RSS asks me to do'

Bhagwat said he will step down from his leadership role if the organisation requests it. Having turned 75 years, Bhagwat explained that he remains in the role of Sarsanghchalak because the RSS has asked him to continue.

'Caste now exists for political purposes and selfish interests'

Mohan Bhagwat said caste now exists largely for selfish interests and political purposes as its traditional occupational basis has disappeared.

'Stature of Bharat Ratna will go up if Savarkar gets it'

Mumbai: In a significant statement, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday said that the stature of Bharat Ratna will go up further if it is conferred upon Veer Savarkar.

The observations of the RSS chief came at the two-day lecture series - "100 years of Sangh Journey - New Horizons' - organised to mark the centenary celebrations of the RSS in Mumbai. Responding to a question on Bharat Ratna for Savarkar, Bhagwat said: "I am not part of that committee... when an opportunity comes, I will surely ask."

QUICK READ

Teachers seek funds for Kannada schools in budget

BENGALURU

The Federation of Karnataka State Unaided Schools and Colleges has submitted a memorandum to Education Minister Madhu Bangarappa requesting him to provide salary grant to Kannada medium schools and colleges. The government has been urged to allocate funds in this regard in the upcoming budget. The teachers, who met the Education Minister, expressed concern over the closure of Kannada medium schools and colleges, which were started in 1995, without any salary grant for the last 30 years. Due to this situation, teachers, students and poor children are not getting basic amenities, the petition said.

Power disruption in parts of city today

BENGALURU

There will be power outages in many parts on Monday. Due to emergency maintenance work by KPTCL, power supply will be disrupted from 10:00 am to 05:00 pm in the 66/11 KV Brigade Meadows sub-station. There will be power outrages in Banjarapalya, Byrasandra, Hosapalya, Shasaka Thota, Agara, Siddanapalya, Karadigudde, Abhaya College, Naveelumane, Valley School. Tataguni Colony Saludoddi, Saludoddi, Vadderahalli, Gate, Lakshmipura, Navagrama, Tataguni, Chowdeshwari Nagar, Cauvery Nagar, Ramachandrappa Layout, Saluhunase, Ramesh Nagar, Uttari, Badekatte, Udipalya, OB Dinnepalya, Thimmegowda, Basappanagowdanalli, BM Kaval, Mantri Primus, Brigade grasslands.

Traffic jams worry motorists in Nelamangala

BENGALURU

Heavy traffic jams have been reported between Bengaluru and Nelamangala. Vehicles queued up for 5 to 6 km on the Tumakuru Highway No. 48 due to weekend traffic. Vehicles were seen moving at a slow speed on the express highway and in some places the vehicles were touched and parked. This has left the riders in a state of shock. Nelamangala traffic police and city police personnel are struggling to control the traffic.

Life certificate to be compulsory for Gruha Lakshmi

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has instructed the Chief Secretary to review the issue of making it mandatory for beneficiaries

BENGALURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has instructed the Chief Secretary to the government to review the issue of making it mandatory for beneficiaries of the Grihalakshmi scheme to provide a life certificate and take immediate action.

State Guarantee Authority Vice Chairman and MLC Dinesh Gooligouda had submitted a request to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar in this regard. Responding to this, the Chief Minister has instructed the Chief Secretary to the government to look into the matter and take immediate action. Through this, the government is taking steps to ensure that the payment of Grihalakshmi money is only paid to those who are eligible.

The government has decided to take this step to check the information of deceased beneficiaries of the Grihalakshmi scheme from time to time and prevent the payment of financial assistance to deceased beneficiaries. It is necessary to prevent the amount

paid under the Grihalakshmi scheme from being paid to deceased beneficiaries in some places. MLC Dinesh Gooli Gowda had requested that the government should take action so that the amount paid by the government is properly utilized and the government money is distributed to other eligible beneficiaries.

The state government's ambitious five guarantee schemes have already been successfully implemented across the state. Among these schemes, under the Grihalakshmi scheme, Rs. 2,000 is being paid monthly to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries from June 2023 as per the government's order.

The beneficiary of the scheme is a woman who is mentioned as the head of the family in the Antyodaya, BPL and APL ration cards distributed by the Food and Civil Supplies Department. He said that financial assistance of about Rs 57,300 crore has been paid to 1,24,12,543 eligible beneficiaries under the Grihalakshmi scheme so far.

Dinesh Gooligowda had requested that, in the same way that retired government employees are made mandatory to submit their life certificates to the relevant banks every year to receive their pension amount, eligible beneficiaries under the Grihalakshmi Yojana should also be made mandatory to submit their life certificates to the relevant banks every year and other measures should be taken to check and take necessary action.

'Preparations for GBA polls after discussing with JD(S)'

BENGALURU

It has been decided to prepare for the Greater Bangalore Authority (GBA) municipal elections after discussing with the JDS and seeking their opinion, said BJP state President BY Vijayendra.

A special meeting was held at the BJP state office regarding the GBA elections. Speaking later, BY Vijayendra, responding to the JDS alliance issue, clarified, A senior BJP leader team will be formed to discuss with the JDS and a decision will be taken. It will not be a big problem. We will not talk about this in front of the media. Deve Gowda has expressed his opinion on the alliance. I have also spoken about it. The decision will be taken as per the advice of the national leaders.

We will win no matter when the GBA elections are held. Despite the tactics and machinations of the Congress party, there is a good chance that the BJP will win in 5 GBAs as well. Therefore, the candidate selection process should also begin soon. A separate meeting of the 5 GBAs

'Deve Gowda has expressed his opinion on the alliance. I have also spoken about it. The decision will be taken as per the advice of the national leaders'.

should be called on Feb. 28 and March 1. All the senior leaders of our party will be present in that meeting. The opinions and advice of our workers locally will be sought. We have discussed the candidate selection process and taken an important decision to move forward, he said.

The meeting was attended by GBA Election In-charge Ram Madhav, Co-In-charges Satish Poonia, Sanjay Upadhyay, Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly R Ashoka, BJP State President BY Vijayendra, Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa, MPs, MLAs, MLCs, District Presidents, former Ministers, former BBMP members and party leaders.

Bengaluru, the Garden City, has now turned into a garbage city. It is debatable whether the in-charge minister or the Congress government has not given priority to Bengaluru in terms of development. Bengaluru is famous not only in India but also in the world. Therefore, this needs to be considered very seriously, he said.

BMRCL seeks police protection at stations amid protest fears

BENGALURU

Namma Metro operator BMRCL has approached the police seeking security arrangements at Metro stations following the implementation of the revised fare structure, amid concerns over protests and possible disturbances.

Officials said that political parties and various organisations may stage demonstrations at Metro stations opposing the fare hike, which could disrupt services and damage public property. In view of this, BMRCL has requested police deployment at sensitive locations to ensure passenger safety and safeguard Metro assets.

A formal complaint has been submitted to the Shankarpuram Police Station, seeking security cover at the National College Metro Station. Similar requests have also been made to other police stations under whose jurisdiction various Metro stations fall, seeking adequate protection from February 9 to February 11.

According to BMRCL, protests could lead to overcrowding, obstruction of passenger movement, and potential harm to station infrastructure. Officials said that preventive security measures are essential to avoid any untoward incidents during peak hours.

Police sources confirmed that arrangements are being reviewed and necessary deployment will be planned to maintain law and order at Metro stations. Commuters have been advised to cooperate with security personnel and follow official instructions during this period.

'Litigants can directly approach HC if police 'rejects' plaint'

BENGALURU

The police cannot refuse to register a case on a complaint filed by any individual. If they refuse, the litigant can file a direct application in the High Court under the BNS Act, the High Court said.

A single-judge bench headed by Justice Suraj Govindaraju issued this order after hearing a petition filed by BH Nagaraju of Bengaluru, challenging the court's decision to refuse to accept a complaint filed by him alleging fraud by his brother in a real estate transaction.

The bench said that if the police station rejects the complaint, the complainant can directly approach the High Court. The rules also allow the complainant to file a private complaint before the jurisdictional magistrate, without the need to first approach a higher police officer against the rejection of the complaint and then if the higher officer also rejects the complaint.

The court said that the procedure of contacting a superior officer and a magistrate prescribed under Section 173(4) of the Indian Civil Protection Code (IPPC) is applicable only in cases of refusal to register a complaint and is not applicable in cases of rejection of a complaint without any reason.

The court said that if a police officer does not accept a complaint or, after accepting it, chooses not to register it as required under the law, without conducting any judicial review of the allegations, in such cases, the legal complainant is allowed to first approach the Superintendent of Police and only then, if the complaint is not resolved, seek the jurisdiction of the Magistrate.

When a complaint is rejected on merits, the complainant has the right to directly challenge the legality of such rejection, including by referring it to the writ jurisdiction of the High Court. The bench said that the police cannot compel the litigant to resort to remedies that are not in keeping with the nature of the complaint. In the present case, the court held that the Station House Officer had assumed the role of determining the nature of the dispute.

GP: What do we understand if high command is silent?

BENGALURU

Only the Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister and the high command know what happened. If the high command is silent, what will we understand, said Home Minister G Parameshwar.

Responding to Yathindra's statement that Siddaramaiah will be Chief Minister for five years, he said that it was his personal statement. We are dependent on the high command. Who said that there is a power deal/ Did the high command say it. The high command should say it. DK Shivakumar may have said it. That is his opinion. We do not know what he knows. He was inside. If the high command is just there, what can we understand?

If there is an agreement, the high command can say or take action. If the high command does not say anything or decide anything and asks us, there is no use. The high command knows what to do and how to manage. The high

command will make the decision. The high command has observed everything, what the situation is. When a decision needs to be made, it will be made. Everything will be settled only when the high command calls, he said.

Talking about the purchase of AI software at Rs 67 crore for control and monitoring of false and hate messages, he said, cybercrime is increasing. Dependence on social media is increasing. Deaths are being caused by false and hate messages, and terrorist activities are also being encouraged. All this needs to be controlled. Do people say that we are not doing anything. For that, necessary preparations, software are needed, and money has to be spent. 200-300 crores are being spent in different states. Mohanty has proposed one thousand crores for this. He said that control has to be done, which means money has to be spent.

Bodybuilder ends life after knowing lover's engagement

BENGALURU

A bodybuilder committed suicide after writing a sad death note to the young woman he loved, stating that she was engaged to someone else.

The incident took place in Mahalaxmi Layout on Saturday evening. Kiran (26) committed suicide by hanging himself at his home. He was in love with a young woman for three years. It is learnt that she was engaged to another man and he committed suicide by mentioning the name of the young woman and her mother in the death note.

Kiran, who had been known as a gym trainer and body builder for many years, had been in love with a young woman for three years. However, it is reported that the young woman, who had told him that she was engaged to another young man, had shown him the invitation card and photos of her new saree. Police sources said that this is why Kiran committed suicide.

The Mahalaxmi Layout police visited the scene and sent the body for a post-mortem.

Prem files plaint against producer Srinivas

BENGALURU

Actor and director Prem has approached the police station against producer Kanakapura Srinivas. Prem has filed a complaint at the KP Agrahara police station, alleging that Srinivas has abused and spoken abusively against him, and has damaged his respectable public life.

Police said that an FIR has been registered against Srinivas under Section 352 (breach of public peace, intentional insult) of the Indian Penal Code based on Prem's complaint.

Prem's complaint details: I am a director and live with my family. I have grown gradually by acting in small films and directing several films. The films I have directed have been released all over the country. Through this, I have earned my own popularity and respect and am leading a respectable life as a good director in the society.

On February 5, 2026, R Srinivas alias Kanakapura Srinivas, the producer of the movie Cotton Pete, held a press conference for the release of the above movie at GT Mall and targeted me personally and abused me with abusive words in a public forum.

In this regard, I am being widely publicized on public platforms like YouTube and some media outlets, which is very humiliating. Prem has requested in his complaint that legal action be taken against Kanakapura Srinivas, who has personally insulted me in public and has damaged my honorable career and defamed me.

Jogi Prem and AP Arjun had also submitted a written complaint to the KFCC chief Jayamala.

RELIEF FOR SITE OWNERS

Karnataka removes land conversion requirement in GBA limits

BENGALURU

The new software for land auto conversion under GBA has been released. With this, the Revenue Department has given good news to the B Khata site owners in Bengaluru.

Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda launched the new software for land auto conversion in the GBA area at a programme held at Vikas Soudha. Speaking on the occasion, he said, "The government has now removed the need for auto conversion of land in the Master Plan (CDP) area. The plan approval can be obtained directly as per the Master Plan. The conversion will be done as part of the plan approval. Also, as per the Master Plan, conversion from B Khata to A Khata has been enabled to benefit lakhs of GBA B Khata site owners.

With the implementation of self-conversion under the current GBA, the Revenue Department has taken a significant step towards curbing

harassment, corruption, delay and burden on the common people. At the same time, it is an important decision to bring reforms in the administration. The objective is to make legal land development simple, smooth and quick. Thus, it will help the common people to buy affordable plots, he assured.

This reform will reduce the cost and time of administration and land development. These reforms will be available not only for residential development but also for industrial and other uses permitted in the master plan. With this reform, the Revenue Department is taking steps to stop exploitation and corruption at the source, he expressed hope.

Current B Khata sites will also benefit from the automatic conversion. The GBA has now simplified the legal framework for converting B Khata properties to A Khata. This will help lakhs of property owners who had previously purchased unauthorized sites. Obtaining A Khata gives legal validity to such sites. All transactions, including obtaining loans and increasing the value of their property, have now been made easier. These services have also been made more popular through online transparency, time limits and automated processes. Also, by integrating all documents with e-Khata, people's property ownership has been further strengthened and legal disputes are no longer a possibility, he said.

QUICK READ

Youth Dies by Suicide After Consuming Poison

Kasaragod

A 32-year-old youth died after consuming poison at his residence near Thalapady Mariyashram Church Compound. The deceased has been identified as Ashok Crasta. He was unmarried and worked as an employee at a shop in Mangaluru. On the night of January 31, around 8 p.m., he was discovered in a serious condition after ingesting poison at home. He was immediately rushed to Derlakatte Hospital for emergency treatment, but could not be saved. Ashok Crasta is survived by his father, mother, two brothers, and three sisters. A case has been registered at the local police station, and the necessary formalities, including post-mortem procedures, have been completed.

68-Year-Old Woman Killed in Bike Collision

Vitla

A 68-year-old woman lost her life on the spot after being struck by a motorcycle near Vitla bus stand on Sunday morning. The deceased has been identified as Sita Shetty, a resident of Maruvala in Mudnur village, Vitla. The bike rider, who suffered serious injuries in the collision, is reportedly from Puttur origin. According to locals, the force of the accident hurled the motorcycle approximately 50 metres from the point of impact. Sita Shetty is survived by her son Rupesh and daughter Rupitha. Vitla police visited the accident site, conducted an on-the-spot inspection, registered a case, and have begun a detailed investigation into the circumstances leading to the crash.

Three Arrested for Ganja Consumption

Mangaluru

Three persons have been arrested in separate incidents for consuming ganja in the Kadri and Kavoor police station limits.
In the first case, during a patrol near Bendur Well, Kadri police sub-inspector Jyothi spotted two individuals—Mohit and Arshad, both from Kerala—under the influence of narcotics. They were immediately apprehended. Medical examination later confirmed ganja consumption. In the second incident, Kavoor police assistant sub-inspector Ramanna Shetty, while on patrol duty, noticed a man consuming ganja in a public place near Kuloor bus stand. Upon questioning, the individual identified himself as Abdul Basheer from Charmadi. He admitted to using ganja, and a subsequent medical check verified the same. Cases have been registered against all three under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. The arrested persons have been produced before the court.

Surathkal Resident Duped of 14 Lakh in Suspected Investment Racket

MANGALURU

A Surathkal resident has reportedly been cheated of over ₹14 lakh in what police describe as a sophisticated online investment fraud. The complaint has been registered at the Cyber Crime Police Station in Udupi district, and an investigation is underway.

According to police sources, the 40-year-old complainant began receiving phone calls in early August 2025 from unknown persons claiming to offer profitable investment opportunities. One

caller, identifying himself as Vishal Rao, convinced the victim to open an account on a website presented as an investment platform.

Authorities said the accused remained in regular contact through online meetings and emails, directing the complainant to transfer funds into several bank accounts as part of the supposed investment process. Believing the scheme to be genuine, the victim made multiple transfers between August and late November 2025.

Police stated that the total amount transferred reached ₹14,07,025. When the complainant failed to receive either the invested funds or the promised returns despite repeated follow-ups, he suspected fraud and approached cybercrime officials.

Following the complaint, police registered a case under sections 66(C) and 66(D) of the Information Technology Act, which deal with cyber impersonation and cheating, along with relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Investigators are examining bank records and digital communication trails to identify the suspects. Cybercrime officials have advised residents to verify the authenticity of online investment platforms and remain wary of unsolicited financial offers promising high returns.

Further inquiries are continuing.

21-Year-Old Held with MDMA in Police Anti-Drug Raid

MANGALURU

A 21-year-old man was arrested by Konaje police during an anti-drug operation in Ullal taluk after officers allegedly seized MDMA and related materials from his possession, police said on Saturday.

The raid was carried out on February 7 by personnel from the Konaje Police Station along with members of the Mangaluru South Sub-Division Anti-Drug Team. Acting on specific information about illegal drug activity, the team conducted a search operation in the Naryagudda hill area of Navagrama site in Balepuni village.

Police identified the accused as Jordan (21), son of Jeevan, originally from Huligere in Srirangapatna taluk of Mandya district. He was reportedly staying in a rented house in Balepuni village at the time of the raid.

During the operation, officers seized approximately 55 grams of MDMA, a mobile phone, a digital weighing scale, and other materials suspected to be linked to the sale of narcotics. The accused was taken into custody for further questioning.

A case has been registered against him at Konaje Police Station under relevant provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, including Sections 8(c) and 22(a), (b), and (c). Police said further investigation is underway to determine the source of the contraband and any wider network involvement.

Officials reiterated their commitment to curbing drug trafficking in the region and urged the public to share information related to illegal narcotics activity.

Following the massive 106.5 kg ganja haul in Puttur Rural limits, a dedicated SIT led by the Sub-Divisional Police Officer arrested two local facilitators and the Odisha supplier.

Three Arrested in ₹53 Lakh Ganja Seizure Case; Odisha Supplier Nabbed

PUTTUR

In a significant breakthrough in the January 19, 2026, ganja seizure case, Puttur Rural police have arrested three persons—including the Odisha-based supplier—linked to the transportation of contraband valued at ₹53.03 lakh.

The arrests include Mohammed Fayaz D.K. (27) from Charmadi in Belthangady and Nazir (42) from Kakinje in Belthangady, who allegedly arranged money and

vehicles for the accused. The main supplier, Deepak Patra (37) from Odisha state, was tracked down and arrested in Odisha by a team led by Puttur Sub-Divisional Police Officer Pramod Kumar.

During the operation in Odisha, police recovered an additional 1 kg 788 grams of ganja valued at ₹80,000 from Deepak Patra.

The team comprised Puttur Sub-Divisional Police Officer Pramod Kumar, Puttur Rural Police Sub-Inspector Gunapal J., and personnel including Devaraj, Harshit, Prashanth, Adram, Prashanth Rai, Praveen Rai, Subramani, Bhimasen, Suresh, and Divyaprakash.

The investigation remains active to trace the full supply chain, identify other potential links, and recover any further contraband or proceeds of crime.

Multiple Livestock Attacks and Leopard Sightings Reported

BELTHANGADY

Leopard-related troubles remain unabated in the taluk, with repeated attacks on livestock and increasing sightings causing concern among residents.

In Malavantige village's Didupe area, a leopard raided a goat shed late on the night of February 5 at Jayanth's house in Poyye. The animal carried away a goat, and the entire sequence was captured on CCTV installed at the premises.

In another incident, around 3:15 a.m. on Saturday in Laadi Darkhasi of Odilnal village, a mother leopard accompanied by two cubs was spotted. The big cat was seen carrying off a goat. A relative who had come from Bengaluru witnessed the event at Basheer Haji's house.

Locals also reported leopard movement late Friday night in several areas along the Belthangady–Guruvayankere road stretch. In the Parenki region near Madantyaru, residents claim to have seen a leopard recently.

Additionally, students near Belthangady Junior College observed a deer running in panic during evening hours on Friday. They suspect a leopard was chasing it, indicating the big cat's presence close to educational institutions and populated zones.

Forest department officials continue to monitor these reports, with traps and surveillance efforts already in place in several vulnerable locations across the taluk. Public appeals have been made to avoid venturing into isolated areas after dusk and to report any unusual animal movement immediately.

Key Accused Arrested in Karwar Woman's Suicide Case; Two Aides Booked

KARWAR

Police have arrested the prime accused in connection with the suicide of a young woman from Kadra, while two others have been booked for allegedly assisting him in evading arrest, Uttara Kannada Superintendent of Police Deepan M.N. said.

Addressing reporters, the SP said the main accused, identified as Chirag Kotharkar, was traced to Chennai and arrested from a relative's residence. He has since been produced before a court, which remanded him to five days of police custody.

Two of Chirag's relatives — Suvarna and Nitin Gavankar — were also taken into custody for allegedly helping him go into hiding. They were later released on bail. Police said separate cases have been registered against those who aided the accused in absconding.

According to investigators, Chirag is believed to have moved across several cities, including Bengaluru, Pune and Hyderabad, while evading police. A special team comprising three inspectors and six sub-inspectors was formed to track him down. Officials said sustained efforts led to his arrest, and further investigation is underway to identify others who may have assisted him.

Police also registered cases against certain social media users for allegedly spreading misinformation about the legal provisions invoked in the case.

The case stems from the death of 19-year-old Rischel Christo D'Souza, who died by suicide on January 9. Her father filed a complaint alleging Chirag's involvement. Due to suspicions surrounding the circumstances of her death, a second post-mortem examination was conducted. The forensic science laboratory report is awaited.

Police said the victim's mobile phone has also been sent for forensic analysis, and all aspects of the case are being examined scientifically. Further developments are expected following the forensic findings.

Advanced Electric Wheelchairs and Assistive Devices Distributed

MANGALURU

A distribution programme for advanced assistive devices to persons with disabilities was held at the office of the Dakshina Kannada Member of Parliament on Sunday.

MP Capt. Brijesh Chowta personally handed over high-quality electric wheelchairs and other essential mobility aids to eligible beneficiaries. The event took place in the presence of Mulki-Moodbidri MLA Umanath Kotian.

Acting on the MP's special appeal, Mangaluru SEZ Limited (MSEZL) provided these devices under its 2025-26 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme. The items included six state-of-the-art electric wheelchairs, one 'Neo Fly and Neo Bolt' conversion kit that transforms a wheelchair into a scooter, and one advanced 'Endolite Symes Prosthesis' (artificial limb).

Speaking on the occasion, MP Capt. Brijesh Chowta said that such modern equipment is extremely important for specially-abled individuals to live independently and with dignity in society. He commended MSEZL for responding positively to his request and supplying top-quality, advanced devices to beneficiaries in the district, describing the gesture as exemplary and worthy of appreciation.

Also present at the programme were MSEZL CEO Suryanarayan, Head of Operations Eeta Srinivasalu, Panibhushan, Yogesh, Jayaprakash Soorinje, and other officials from the organisation.

T20 Blind Women's World Cup Winners Visit Udupi Krishna Math

UDUPI

Members of the T20 Blind Women's World Cup–winning cricket team visited the historic Sri Krishna Math in Udupi, where they were accorded a warm reception by the temple administration.

The players offered prayers to Lord Krishna through the traditional Kanakana Kindi and received blessings during a ceremonial interaction. Paryaya Sri Shiroor Math seer Vedevardhana Theertha honoured the visiting cricketers, offering mantrakshate and congratulating them on their international achievement. The seer commended the athletes for bringing pride through their performance and dedication.

The team later spent time interacting with the seer and temple representatives, discussing their journey and recent success. Udupi MLA Yashpal Suvarna also met the players during the visit and extended his congratulations, wishing them continued success in their sporting careers.

Following the temple visit, the cricketers received prasada before leaving for Manipal. The team members were scheduled to participate in the Manipal Marathon, organisers said.

Temple officials noted that the visit highlighted the connection between sporting excellence and cultural tradition, with devotees and visitors welcoming the athletes and applauding their achievements.

MAHE Felicitates Indian Blind Women's Cricket Team Champions

MANIPAL

Phula Saren (All-rounder) Odisha
Anu Kumari (All-rounder) Bihar
Kavya NR (All-rounder) Karnataka
Karuna Kumari (All-rounder) Madhya Pradesh
Sushma Patel (All-rounder) Madhya Pradesh
Durga Yevle (Wicket Keeper)
FELICITATION CEREMONY

The Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE) hosted a heartfelt felicitation for India's blind women's cricket team, fresh from their landmark victory in the T20 World Cup, on Saturday at the Valley View Hotel auditorium.

MAHE Pro-Chancellor Dr. H.S. Ballal, addressing the gathering, praised the players for proving that systematic training and dedication can shatter traditional societal perceptions about persons with disabilities. He said their success on the international stage inspires everyone and shows that limits exist only in the mind.

MAHE Vice-Chancellor Lt. Gen. (Dr.) M.D. Venkatesh commended the team's extraordinary sporting spirit and resolute mindset. He emphasised that true excellence in sport is not confined by physical limitations but is built on opportunity and inner strength, qualities the players have abundantly demonstrated.

During the event, Bank of Baroda launched a 'Braille-based Credit Card' aimed at the financial empowerment of persons with visual impairment. The card was jointly released by Bank of Baroda Chief General Manager Ravindra Rai M. and MAHE Pro-Chancellor Dr. H.S. Ballal.

MAHE stated, "The special felicitation ceremony celebrated the team's resilience, discipline, and commitment to excellence."

The programme was organised in collaboration with Samarthanam Trust, an organisation for persons with disabilities, and the Blind Cricket Association of India. Samarthanam founder Mahantesh G. Kivadasannavar and social worker Rayan were among those present.

QUICK READ

JDS leaders congratulate new Mysuru District President

Mysuru
JDS leaders extended congratulations to former MLA Ashwin Kumar after his appointment as the new District President of the Mysuru District Janata Dal (Secular). Party leaders and workers gathered to wish him success in his new role. Former Zilla Panchayat President C.J. Dwarkeesh, Mysuru City JDS Working President S. Prakash Priyadarshan, Backward Classes District President Srinivas, and JDS leader Pailwan Dinesh Gowda were present during the occasion. Leaders expressed confidence that Ashwin Kumar's experience and leadership would strengthen the party at the district level and help address public issues effectively. The meeting concluded with mutual greetings and hopes for party growth.

Thermal drone deployed to track leopard menace

Chamarajanagar
Villagers of Ganganadoddy, Hanur taluk, are worried after a leopard was spotted in Bhaskar's farm. Over the past year, many cattle and calves have been attacked. Following repeated requests, the forest department conducted a thermal drone operation to locate the wild animal. Forest officials said they are closely monitoring the area and will take necessary steps to safely capture the leopard. Farmers expressed relief, hoping their livestock and families remain safe. Authorities assured continuous vigilance to prevent further incidents and protect both people and wildlife in the village.

Baby elephant found dead near Thalawadi forest

Chamarajanagar
The lifeless body of a baby elephant was discovered near Thalawadi, in Arulawadi village of the Jeeragahalli forest, part of the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu, adjoining Chamarajanagar district. Local farmers alerted the forest officials after noticing the body. Tamil Nadu forest officers reached the site promptly and have begun a detailed investigation. Authorities said the exact cause of Marianne's death will be confirmed after further examination. Villagers expressed shock over the sudden incident. Forest officials are examining all possibilities to determine how the tragedy occurred and ensure safety in the forest areas.

HD Kumaraswamy accuses Siddaramaiah of ruining state

Kumaraswamy said the state raised metro fares despite central advice, unfairly burdening common people with increased charges

MYSURU

Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H.D. Kumaraswamy strongly accused Chief Minister Siddaramaiah of pushing Karnataka towards financial collapse. Addressing a press conference at the government guest house in Mysuru, he alleged that poor financial management and wrong priorities are bankrupting the state.

Kumaraswamy said the state government has increased various charges, including metro fares, to raise funds, even though the central government had written a letter advising against a fare hike. He claimed the burden of such decisions is being placed directly on common people.

Speaking about the Ettinahole drinking water project, Kumaraswamy said it was originally estimated at ₹8,000 crore but has now crossed ₹33,000 crore. Referring to the CAG report, he alleged that the project was handed over to unqualified contractors, leading to misuse of public money.

On BBMP elections, he said there is no confusion within the JD(S) and BJP alliance, and both parties will fight together to remove what he called a corrupt government. When asked about a possible change in the Chief Minister, Kumaraswamy said he is not an astrologer and avoided a direct answer.

Highlighting the Union Budget, he said the Centre has focused on youth employment, waived taxes on 17 cancer-related medicines, and strengthened the industrial sector. He rejected claims that Karnataka was ignored, stating ₹500 crore has been allocated for the Automotive Research Association of India. He added that he has written to the Chief Minister seeking 100 acres of land in Mandya for an automobile unit.

Kumaraswamy urged the state government to maintain healthy relations with the Centre instead of blaming it for every failure. He also expressed confidence that JD(S)-BJP candidates will win all constituencies in the coming elections.

Guru Basava Pattadeva invites H.D. Kumaraswamy to Amrita Mahotsava

BHALKI

The presiding officer of Hiremath Sansthan, Guru Basava Pattadeva, met Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy to invite him to the upcoming Amrita Mahotsava. The festival will mark the 75th year of Nadoja Dr. Basavalinga Pattadevar, a respected religious and social leader, and will be celebrated in Bhalki town in April 2026.

The three-day event will honor Dr. Pattadevar's lifelong work in education, religion, and community service. During the meeting, Guru Basava Pattadeva presented a portrait to Minister Kumaraswamy as a gesture of respect and requested his presence at the historic celebration.

Former Minister Bandappa Khashempure and Bidar District JD(S) President Somnath Patil were also present during the invitation. Organizers said that the festival will include spiritual programs, cultural events, and gatherings of devotees from across the region.

Devotees and locals expressed excitement about the Mahotsava, saying it is a chance to celebrate Dr. Pattadevar's contributions and seek his blessings. The organizers emphasized that the event will be conducted in a meaningful and organized manner, reflecting his dedication to social and educational development.

The Amrita Mahotsava promises to be a memorable occasion, uniting people from different communities and honoring one of Bhalki's most respected figures.

Parents were honoured; management pledged student training and facilities, with principal praising support that attracts families seeking futures

'Discipline and persistence lead students to success'

BIDAR

Children can achieve success only through constant effort, discipline, punctuality, and strong determination, said Dr. Salimullah Khan, member of the Pharmacy Council of India, while addressing students at a graduation day celebration in Bidar. He spoke at the graduation program organized by Maharaj College of Pharmacy at Shahu Patne Function Hall in Pratapnagar.

Dr. Khan said students must dream big, set clear goals, and work daily with focus to reach their aims in life. He warned that in today's mechanized age, lack of attention and shortcuts can harm education and future careers. He advised children to study seriously, remain persistent, and use time wisely to achieve meaningful results.

Parents were also honored during the program, highlighting their important role in

guiding, supporting, and shaping their children's lives. Chairman of Dyad Group of Institutions, Y. Madhavarao, said the institution takes responsibility to train students every year. He assured that all facilities needed for education and career development will be provided to help students stand independently. College Principal Dr. Sanjivakumar Biradar presided over the event and praised the support of management, staff, and parents. He said the institution's caring approach encourages more parents to enroll their children for a better future.

Dignitaries present included Professor Dr. L.D. Srinivasa, Anil Kumar Kale, and Sheikh Mastan Wali. Graduating final year pharmacy students took an oath and were awarded certificates amid applause. Teaching and non-teaching staff, students, and parents attended, making the celebration memorable and inspiring. The program concluded with guidance messages encouraging youth to pursue knowledge, ethics, service, and lifelong learning with optimism ahead.

MM Hills Shivarathri Jatra Preparations Under Review

MYSURU

Deputy Commissioner of Chamarajanagar district Shreeroopa reviewed preparations for the upcoming five-day-long Shivarathri Jatra at Male Mahadeshwara Hills, focusing on safety and basic arrangements for devotees.

The district administration expects a large number of pilgrims from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu to reach MM Hills on foot between February 14 and 18, following the traditional padayatra. To manage the rush, the Deputy Commissioner visited Basavanakadu area and inspected the Cauvery river crossing, which is an important point on the pilgrimage route.

Along with Superintendent of Police M. Muthuraj, she reviewed arrangements along the Kanakapura–Ramanagara–Channapatna–Magadi route, through which pilgrims pass before entering forest stretches leading to the temple. Officials noted that water release from the KRS reservoir has reduced, and instructed deployment of extra staff at river crossing points to prevent accidents.

The Forest Department was directed to deploy additional patrol teams inside forest areas and advise pilgrims to walk only during daylight hours for safety. Emergency medical centres, doctors, ambulances, and medicines will be placed along the route, while SDRF and Fire and Emergency Services teams will remain on standby.

Deputy Commissioner Shreeroopa said the turnout may exceed expectations and assured that all arrangements will be made without disturbing age-old traditions. She appealed to devotees to cooperate with officials and follow instructions for a smooth pilgrimage. Gram Panchayats were instructed to ensure clean drinking water, lighting, sanitation, and other basic facilities along the route.

Housewife ends life by hanging

BASAVAKALYAN

A 22-year-old housewife died by suicide, allegedly driven to despair by relentless mental and physical abuse from her husband's family in Om Nagar, behind the city bus stand.

Anjanabai, from Joldabaka village in Bhalki taluk, married Shekhar Patil, a local resident, in 2022. The couple had an 11-month-old child. Sources claim post-marriage torment by her husband and in-laws pushed her to hang herself at home.

In a complaint to Basavakalyan Nagar police, Anjanabai's father revealed shocking details: "My daughter called us distraught, saying her mother-in-law Arunabai forced her into prostitution. We stayed silent, hoping it would pass. Unable to endure the harassment, she took her life."

Police have registered a case based on the father's statement and launched an investigation into the allegations of abuse and coercion.

The tragedy highlights rising concerns over domestic violence and marital harassment in rural areas, echoing recent calls for better intervention mechanisms.

Pilot confusion causes chaos during CM helicopter landing

The CM's helicopter mistakenly landed at MLA Vajjal's helipad, while Minister Jarkiholi's helicopter landed at the CM's designated helipad due to pilot confusion

RAICHUR

Confusion prevailed in Lingasugur town on Sunday after Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's helicopter landed at a location different from the designated helipad, creating brief chaos among officials and the police.

The Chief Minister had arrived in Lingasugur to attend the wedding of the son of Legislative Council member Sharanagouda Patil of Bayyapur. As per the official plan, the CM's helicopter was scheduled to land at a private layout helipad on Raichur Road, on the outskirts of the town. All security arrangements and protocol preparations were made at this location.

However, due to pilot confusion, the helicopter instead landed at a private helipad belonging to MLA Manappa Vajjal on Kalaburagi Road. This helipad had actually been prepared for the landing of Minister Satish Jarkiholi's helicopter. At the same time, Minister Jarkiholi's helicopter landed at the helipad that was meant for the Chief Minister.

Police personnel and officials, who were waiting to receive the CM with a guard of honour at the Raichur Road helipad, were surprised when the Minister arrived instead. Soon after learning that the Chief Minister had landed at a different location, senior officials rushed to the MLA's private helipad to ensure security and protocol arrangements.

After the situation was clarified, the Chief Minister's helicopter later moved to the designated helipad, where it received the official police salute before taking off again. The brief mix-up caused momentary confusion but was resolved without any untoward incident.

Police officials later explained that three helipads had been arranged in Lingasugur for the day, including separate ones for the Chief Minister and other ministers. Due to a misunderstanding by the pilots, the helicopters landed at the wrong helipads. The police stated that the matter was handled smoothly and that there was no security lapse.

Sound barrier planned to protect Ranganathittu birds

MYSURU

The National Highways Authority of India has planned a soundproof barrier along a short stretch of the Mysuru–Kushalnagar highway near the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary. The main aim of this step is to reduce traffic noise and protect birds living in this sensitive area. The proposed barrier will cover about 650 metres where the highway passes close to the eco-sensitive zone of the sanctuary.

Officials said the barrier will act as an acoustic wall that absorbs and deflects sound from vehicles. This will help keep noise levels within safe limits and prevent disturbance to birds. The project is part of the 92.3-kilometre access-controlled Mysuru–Kushalnagar highway, being developed to handle traffic growth in the region.

NHAI officials explained that wildlife clearance is compulsory because the highway alignment also passes near the buffer zone of the Nagarahole Tiger Reserve. The proposal for the sound barrier has already been approved by the Standing Committee of the State Wildlife Board. The State government has now sent documents to the National Board for Wildlife for final approval.

According to engineers at the site, the sound barrier will be between two and five metres high, depending on local needs. Such barriers are commonly used near wildlife areas, schools, and hospitals to control noise pollution.

The highway project, costing about Rs 4,130 crore, was inaugurated in March 2023 but faced delays due to land acquisition issues. Once completed, it is expected to reduce travel time between Bengaluru and Kushalnagar and ease traffic congestion in Mysuru by bypassing the city. Officials believe this will benefit tourists, commuters, and residents.

AYURVEDIC KNOWLEDGE EXPANSION

'Ayurveda plays key role in healthy society'

SHIVAMOGGA

Ayurveda plays an important role in building a healthy life and a healthy society, and more scientific research should be carried out in this traditional system of medicine, said Sri Varasadyojata Shivacharya Swamiji. He stressed that both the central and state governments must take active steps to support and strengthen Ayurvedic research and treatment.

He was speaking at the inauguration and convocation ceremony of new facilities at TMAES Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital in Nidige. The event marked the opening of the Shishya Sanskara building, library, seminar hall, and several academic departments on the college campus.

Sri Varasadyojata Shivacharya Swamiji, who is the President of TMAE Society and Harpanahalli Teggina Math, said that increased research in Ayurveda will improve medicine development and treatment methods. He encouraged students and doctors practicing Ayurveda to move forward with confidence, as this system of medicine is gaining recognition across the world. He added that governments should establish more research centers

and give priority to scientific studies to promote Ayurveda further.

Speaking at the inauguration of the modern operation theatre and departmental buildings, Shivamogga MP B.Y. Raghavendra said Ayurveda is a science-based system of medicine. He pointed out that lifestyle-related diseases such as cancer and heart ailments are increasing rapidly. Instead of only depending on medicines after falling ill, people should focus on maintaining good health. He said yoga and Ayurveda help prevent many health problems and noted that the central government is supporting Ayurvedic treatment.

Pravachan Yogi Sri Mahanta Maha Swamiji of Mudgal Kalyana Ashram also addressed the gathering. Several dignitaries, including educationists, doctors, and administrators, were present on the stage.

On the occasion, MP B.Y. Raghavendra was felicitated. Cultural programs, including devotional songs and training sessions, added value to the event, making it memorable and meaningful for all attendees.

QUICK READ

Woman allegedly assaulted, evicted by in-laws over divorce plea

Hassan

In Arakalgud town, Arpita, married for love to Shashikumar three years ago, was reportedly harassed by her husband's family. Shashikumar, a driver, separated from Arpita months after their wedding. His parents had provided her a room above their house, where she lived while working in a canteen and raising their child. Angered by Arpita seeking divorce and maintenance in court, the in-laws allegedly attacked her, broke household items, and forced her to vacate the room. Injured, Arpita is being treated at Arakalgud Government Hospital. Police have registered a case and are investigating the incident.

Wife stops husband's secret second marriage

Tumkuru

In Yedeyur, Lepakshi surprised everyone by stopping her husband Hariprasad's second marriage with police help. Hariprasad, married to Lepakshi in 2014 after a school romance, had separated from her but never legally divorced. He planned to wed another woman from Mandya at SLN Kalyana Mantapa between 8:15–8:40 AM. Lepakshi arrived with police, confronted Hariprasad publicly, and demanded the wedding be called off, accusing him of cheating. Furious but unable to proceed, Hariprasad canceled the marriage. The incident left guests and locals shocked, and Lepakshi's family criticized him for attempting a second marriage without resolving the first legally.

Car-bike crash kills two in Chikkaballapur district

Chikkaballapur

A tragic road accident claimed two lives near JK Bhavan on the Bengaluru-Madanapalli road in Chintamani taluk. The victims, riding a bike, have been identified as Nagaraja (68) from Kallahalli village and Venkata Reddy (58) from Munthakadirenahalli village. Eyewitnesses reported that a car coming from Bengaluru collided with their bike, sending it flying about 200 meters. Both riders fell, suffering serious injuries. Locals and police rushed them to the city public hospital via 108 ambulance. They were later being transferred to NIMHANS in Bengaluru for further treatment but died near Hosakote. Their bodies were brought back to the public hospital for post-mortem. The car involved was abandoned at the site, and its occupants fled. DySP Muralidhar, SI Nagamma, and Chintamani Rural Police inspected the scene and have registered a case. The investigation is ongoing to identify the driver and hold them accountable.

Kodugurki Manjunath takes charge as JDS president

DEVANAHALLI

Kodugurki K.V. Manjunath has been appointed as the new Janata Dal (Secular) President of Bengaluru Rural district. An official order was issued announcing his appointment. Speaking after taking charge, Manjunath said he will work honestly and responsibly to strengthen the party across all four taluks of the district.

He said the guidance of former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, former Chief Minister and Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, and JDS State Youth President Nikhil Kumaraswamy will be the foundation of his work. He assured party leaders and workers that the responsibility given to him will be carried out with dedication and discipline.

Manjunath stated that the party organization will be strengthened from the booth level. Committees will be formed at every booth to connect closely with people and address local issues. He said unity among party leaders, workers, and supporters is essential to rebuild the party's strength in the district.

He also said efforts will be made to ensure victory for JDS candidates in upcoming Gram Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat, Zilla Panchayat, and municipal elections. According to him, the party will highlight the development work carried out during the JDS rule and remind people of its contribution to the state.

Manjunath said booth-level committees will strengthen the party, stressing unity among leaders, workers, and supporters to rebuild district strength

Manjunath said he plans to tour all four taluks of Bengaluru Rural district to meet party workers and understand ground-level issues. He expressed gratitude to former MLAs, party presidents, office bearers, leaders, and workers for trusting him with this role.

He added that the party will move forward by taking everyone together, focusing on public issues, and strengthening the hands of Deve Gowda and Kumaraswamy. The appointment has created fresh enthusiasm among JDS workers in the district, who hope the party will regain its strength under his leadership.

Rowdy sheeter shot during robbery attempt in Bhadravati

When police attempted arrests, Mubarak and associates allegedly attacked with stones and knives, injuring PSI Siddappa seriously and wounding PSI Mane and constable Adarsh

SHIVAMOGGA

A rowdy sheeter was shot in the leg by Bhadravati police just a day after his release from jail, following a violent robbery attempt that left several police personnel injured. The incident took place near Gourapura in Bhadravati taluk.

The injured accused has been identified as Ditchi Mubarak, a known rowdy sheeter with multiple criminal cases registered against him. Police said Mubarak was released from Shivamogga Central Jail on February 6. Within a day, he allegedly returned to criminal activity by planning a robbery along with seven to eight associates.

Based on specific information that Mubarak was moving with deadly weapons in a car and a scooter near Shivani Cross, Bhadravati DySP formed a special team and rushed to the spot. The team included police inspectors and staff from Paper Town, Hosamane and New Town police stations.

When police tried to arrest the group, Mubarak and his associates allegedly attacked them using stones and knives. During the attack, PSI Siddappa from Hosamane Police Station suffered a fractured leg and stab injuries. PSI Krishnakumar Mane sustained injuries to his finger, while constable Adarsh also suffered injuries to his leg.

Police said PSI Krishnakumar repeatedly asked Mubarak to surrender. However, when Mubarak attempted to stab the police again, warning shots were fired in the air. As the accused continued to advance with a knife, PSI Krishnakumar fired in self-defense, shooting Mubarak in the right leg.

Mubarak was immediately shifted to Bhadravati Taluk Hospital for first aid and later referred to Meggan Hospital in Shivamogga for further treatment. His accomplices, including Zaheer, Rehmat, Pasha, Junaid and Manusingh, were taken into custody.

Shivamogga Superintendent of Police Nikhil visited the hospital and praised the police team for their brave action, stating that they acted responsibly to protect lives despite serious risk.

Herd of 40 wildebeests spotted in Kanakapura

RAMANAGARA

Villagers in Kadanchin near Kadushivanahalli in Kanakapura taluk were left stunned after spotting a herd of around 40 wildebeests near their fields. The animals had reportedly entered the Bannerghatta Wildlife Zone from Tamil Nadu forests and wandered into nearby village lands, causing concern among residents.

Local villagers immediately alerted the Bannerghatta Forest Department, and forest officials visited the site to assess the situation. With careful guidance, the team successfully guided the wildebeests back into the forest during the night, ensuring both human and animal safety.

The unusual sighting was captured by the forest staff on mobile phones, and the video has since gone viral on social media, drawing widespread attention to wildlife movements in the region.

Officials reminded villagers to stay cautious and avoid approaching wild animals, urging them to report any sightings promptly. Such incidents highlight the ongoing challenges of human-wildlife coexistence near forest boundaries and the importance of rapid response to prevent potential conflicts.

The forest department also emphasized that increased vigilance and community awareness are key to managing stray herds and safeguarding both local communities and wildlife.

This sighting adds to recent reports of wild animal movements in Kanakapura, underscoring the need for coordinated conservation and safety efforts.

Revanna said the guarantee schemes are improving lives, delivering benefits, and earning widespread acceptance and appreciation from communities.

Guaranteed Schemes bring light to poor lives: Revanna

KOLAR

H.M. Revanna, Chairman of the Guarantee Schemes Implementation Authority, has highlighted the positive impact of government guarantee schemes on the lives of economically vulnerable people in Karnataka. Speaking after reviewing the progress of these schemes in Kolar, he emphasized that the programmes have not caused any financial burden to the government but have provided real benefits to the poor.

Revanna said, "These guarantee schemes are designed to directly improve the lives of people. Beneficiaries have received support in a timely manner, and the schemes have been widely accepted and appreciated by the communities."

He also noted that while opposition parties had initially criticized these initiatives, their effectiveness and popularity have silenced earlier criticisms. "Even parties that previously questioned these programmes in other states are now launching similar guarantee schemes themselves," he added.

The review meeting in Kolar highlighted the schemes' role in supporting education, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities for marginalized sections. Revanna urged continued monitoring and timely implementation to ensure maximum benefit to citizens.

The success of these guarantee schemes demonstrates how targeted government programmes can provide practical assistance, build public trust, and improve the standard of living for the underprivileged in Karnataka.

Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi condemns misuse of Gandhiji's image

BENGALURU

The Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi has strongly condemned the recent misuse of Mahatma Gandhi's image in advertisements published in major newspapers across the State. The organisation said the depiction was completely against Gandhiji's core ideals of Ahimsa (Non-violence), Satyagraha, and Sarvodaya, and termed it a symbolic "assassination" of Gandhi's values, bringing shame to the nation.

The statement pointed out that while Mahatma Gandhi is revered globally as a symbol of truth and non-violence, some media outlets have recently used his image in a derogatory or politically convenient manner. Such representations risk sending the wrong message, especially to the youth, who look up to Gandhiji as a moral guide.

The Nidhi emphasized that even if Gandhiji's ideals are difficult to fully communicate to younger generations, his personality and principles must never be disrespected. It appealed to the media to act responsibly and uphold the dignity of the Father of the Nation, highlighting the media's national responsibility in shaping public understanding.

The organisation urged newspapers to publish the statement to raise public awareness and reinforce the importance of respecting Gandhiji's legacy.

The Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi reaffirmed its commitment to protecting Gandhiji's image and ideals and called for collective efforts to prevent misuse in the future.

Thousands of women lead patriotic Hindu Samajotsava rally

BENGALURU

A historic Hindu Samajotsava was held at Govindarajanagar in Bengaluru, drawing thousands of women and devotees who participated with great enthusiasm. The grand event reflected a strong sense of cultural pride and patriotism among the participants.

The program was organized by the Hindu Samajotsava Organizing Committee at the BGS playground. Before the main event, a large procession began from Prashanthanagar Circle and moved towards the venue. Thousands of women carried kalasams and garlands, while many activists carried portraits of Bharat Mata. Hundreds of children dressed as Bala Sri Ram added color and devotion to the procession.

BJP National Organizing Secretary B.L. Santosh inaugurated the event by offering floral tributes to Bharat Mata and performing cow worship.

Speaking on the occasion, he said the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has been working continuously to spread patriotism among the youth. He stated that Hindu culture is ancient and has guided the nation through difficult times, even when there were no kings or rulers.

Sri Sri Sri Soumyanath Swamiji, Mataji Vivekamayi of Bhavatarini Ashram, and Shivamuni Swamiji of Jambhava Matha led the procession and blessed the gathering. Soumyanath Swamiji said Hinduism stands for service, strength, and unity from Kashmir to Kanyakumari.

MP Tejasvi Surya and several social leaders were present at the event. Speakers highlighted that thousands of similar Hindu festivals are being held across Karnataka, showing the growing cultural awareness among people.

The leaders also urged society to respect diversity while protecting traditions. They called upon people, especially youth, to stay united, uphold values, and contribute positively to the nation's future through service.

HD Kumaraswamy opposes Malur flyover project

KOLAR

HD Kumaraswamy, Union Minister, has strongly opposed the proposed flyover in Malur town, Kolar district, citing concerns for local residents. He questioned the purpose of the project, which is estimated to cost around ₹700 crore, and asked whether the benefits justify the disruption it may cause.

Speaking to the media, Kumaraswamy said, "For decades, hundreds of families have lived and run shops along the main roads of Malur. The construction of this flyover will displace them, affecting their livelihoods. What is the real benefit of this project?"

He further argued that Malur is already well-connected. "The Bengaluru Satellite Town Ring Road (STRR) is operational, and the Chennai–Bengaluru highway passes through the region. With these existing routes, is another flyover really necessary?" Kumaraswamy added that the project seems more like a commission-driven plan rather than one serving the public interest.

Local residents have expressed fear of losing their homes and shops if the flyover proceeds. HDK's intervention has amplified these concerns, urging the government to reconsider or provide alternative solutions that do not harm the livelihoods of the affected families.

The debate over the flyover highlights the tension between large infrastructure projects and community welfare in rapidly developing towns like Malur.

PUBLIC GRIEVANCES HEARD

Lokayukta warns officials over public hardships

CHIKKABALLAPUR

Deputy Lokayukta Justice K.N. Phanindra has issued a strong warning to government officials over rising public difficulties in Chikkaballapur district. He was speaking during a public grievance meeting held at the Taluk Panchayat Sabha Hall in Chintamani, where he personally heard complaints from citizens and reviewed district-level administration.

During the meeting, people raised several issues related to delayed e-accounts in gram panchayats, poor village roads, pending public works, and irregularities in different government departments. Justice Phanindra took serious note of the complaints and instructed officials to give clear explanations and immediately fix the problems. He stressed that public servants are answerable to the people and cannot ignore basic responsibilities.

Special attention was given to delays in e-account records at various gram panchayats. The Deputy Lokayukta questioned Panchayat Development Officers and directed them to make all e-accounts transparent and accessible to the public. He ordered officials to understand people's problems and resolve accounting delays without further excuses.

Complaints about blocked and damaged rural roads were also discussed. Police and concerned department officials were told to inspect such roads and ensure that public movement is not affected. Justice Phanindra warned that if officials fail to clear road-related issues, legal action will be initiated against them.

Serious concern was also expressed over the poor management of hostels in the taluk. Complaints stated that wardens were neglecting student safety and basic facilities. The Deputy Lokayukta warned that strict action would follow if hostel conditions do not improve, adding that future complaints would be closely monitored.

Several senior officials, including the District Collector, Zilla Panchayat officers, police officials, and department heads, attended the meeting. Justice Phanindra made it clear that continued negligence would not be tolerated and urged officials to work honestly to reduce public suffering and restore trust in the system.

QUICK READ

Security forces arrest five militants; recover mortars

IMPHAL

Security forces in Manipur have arrested five hardcore militants belonging to different insurgent outfits and recovered several mortars and two Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) from areas along the India-Myanmar border during the past 24 hours, officials said on Sunday. A police official said the mortars and IEDs were recovered from the Yangoubung area along the India-Myanmar border under the jurisdiction of Moreh police station in Tengnoupal district. Later, these explosives were destroyed by a bomb disposal squad. Manipur shares a 398-km unfenced border with Myanmar, which serves as a key transit route for the smuggling of drugs particularly heroin and methamphetamine tablets as well as arms, ammunition and other contraband into India.

T'gana Forensic Lab denies loss of evidence in key cases

HYDERABAD

The police launched an investigation into the fire incident at the Forensic Science Laboratory of Telangana Police, even as authorities denied loss of evidence relating to key cases, including the one registered against Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, in the past. Main opposition Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) raised the suspicion that digital evidence relating to the 2015 'note-for-vote' case allegedly involving the Chief Minister could have been destroyed in the fire that occurred. BRS working president K. T. Rama Rao also alleged a cover-up for lack of evidence in cooked-up political cases like phone tapping.

Shaurya Sandhya: A cultural tribute to military valour

The event, held as part of the formal investiture ceremony, brought together serving armed forces personnel, veterans, and civilian dignitaries together.

GANDHINAGAR

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel on Sunday said that a special cultural programme honouring gallantry and distinguished service awardees of the Indian Army formed the centrepiece of the Southern Command Investiture Ceremony 2026, held in Gandhinagar.

The programme, titled Shaurya Sandhya, was organised as part of the formal investiture ceremony and brought together serving armed forces personnel, veterans, and civilian dignitaries to recognise acts of courage, dedication, and service to the nation. The event was hosted at the amphitheatre of the Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre, a key venue for national-level programmes in Gujarat.

Senior military leadership was present at the ceremony, including Lieutenant General Dhiraj Seth, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Southern Command, and Air Marshal Tejinder Singh, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the South Western Air Command. Several senior officers from the armed forces also attended the event.

The cultural presentations featured a series of curated performances inspired by India's rich military heritage and cultural traditions. The programme combined elements of history, music, dance, and martial arts to portray the bravery and sacrifices of the armed forces. The evening concluded with a visually striking drone display, drawing applause from the audience.

Organisers said the performances were designed to pay tribute not only to the courage and sacrifice of soldiers but also to the contributions of citizens involved in strengthening national security. The thematic focus of Shaurya Sandhya reflected the interconnected roles of diplomacy, economy, defence, and technology in shaping India's growth and its standing on the global stage.

The programme was aligned with the national vision of 'Viksit Bharat' and highlighted the traditions, values, and discipline of the armed forces through a cultural medium. Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Patel said he was pleased to attend the programme organised by the Southern Command in Gandhinagar and praised the armed forces for their unwavering commitment to the nation.

Officials said the ceremony successfully blended honour, culture, and national pride, reinforcing the bond between the armed forces and the citizens they serve.

BJP launches 500 electric buses in Delhi

DELHI

Calling Team Rekha Gupta a result-oriented government, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President Nitin Nabin on Sunday launched 500 electric buses in Delhi, sharply criticising the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government for what he described as misleading advertisements and a lack of real development on the ground.

Speaking at the launch event at Ramlila Maidan, which coincided with the first anniversary of the BJP government in Delhi, Nabin said it was the dream of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to transform the national capital into a Developed Delhi with comprehensive development, modern infrastructure, and improved civic facilities. He said this vision was being realised under the leadership of Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

This dream is today visibly coming to fruition through various developmental initiatives, Nabin said, while accusing the previous AAP government of making false promises. Their lies and falsehoods have created problems for Delhi residents. They used to put up large hoardings and organise grand events, but their development remained confined to paper only, he added.

He said the massive mandate in favour of the BJP in Delhi had significantly raised public expectations and stressed that the current government was committed to delivering on its promises. I am confident that CM Rekha Gupta will prove herself as the head of a result-oriented government, he said.

Highlighting the launch of the electric buses as a major step towards improving air quality, Nabin said promoting public transport was the most effective way to tackle vehicular pollution in the capital. He credited Chief Minister Rekha Gupta for prioritising clean and sustainable mobility as part of Delhi's broader development agenda.

Gupta also expressed her gratitude on X. "Today, on the occasion of the auspicious launch of 500 electric buses in Delhi, the affection and encouragement received from the National President of the Bharatiya Janata Party, @NitinNabin-ji, is extremely inspiring for us, she wrote.

Manjhi calls NEET aspirant death a 'murder'

PATNA

The Union Minister described the incident as extremely painful and categorically termed it a murder

Union MSME Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi on Sunday said that Purnea MP Rajesh Ranjan, popularly known as Pappu Yadav, was arrested in connection with an old case, even as reports suggested the action followed his vocal stance on the suspicious death of a NEET aspirant in Patna.

Responding to media queries during a press conference in Gaya, Manjhi said he did not wish to comment extensively on the arrest, citing the matter as sub judice. I don't want to say much about it, but it is being said that Pappu Yadav was arrested as he was raising the NEET aspirant death case. He was arrested in an old case. This is a legal matter, so we cannot comment further, the Union Minister said.

Addressing the death of the NEET aspirant, Manjhi described the incident as extremely painful and categorically termed it a murder.

He said the state government was committed to ensuring justice in the case. Referring to statements by Samrat Choudhary, Manjhi said the Bihar Home Minister had made it clear that the accused would not be spared and had urged people to come forward with any evidence related to the case.

Manjhi added that the investigation into the NEET aspirant's death was being conducted by multiple agencies to ensure transparency and accountability. The case, probed by the SIT and CID, has now been handed over to the CBI. If further agencies are required, the government will not hesitate, he said.

Pappu Yadav was arrested late on connection with a 31-year-old case related to a rented property. An FIR in the matter was registered at the Gardanibagh Police Station in Patna in 1995. He is currently under 14-day judicial custody and has been admitted to Patna Medical College and Hospital due to health issues. Sources said he is likely to be shifted to Beur Jail in Patna once his condition stabilises.

Since the NEET aspirant death case came to light in Patna, Pappu Yadav has been among the most vocal political figures demanding justice.

KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT STOCK (SECURITIES)
Finance Department, Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru

NOTICE

1. Aggregate Amount : Total Rs.7000 crore (Rs.2,000 crore - Re-issue of 7.49% SGS 2035; Rs.2,000 crore - 6-Year 6-Month Tenure; Rs.2,000 crore 9-Year 6-Month Tenure; Rs.1,000 crore 10-Year Tenure)
2. Method of Issue : By auction, through RBI (PDO), Mumbai
3. Date of auction : February 10, 2026

Government of Karnataka invites subscription to the above securities. Copies of the Notification and Application forms may be obtained from PDO, RBI, Bangalore. Non-competitive bidding facility has been introduced by RBI to encourage participation of retail investors. The Government stock up to 10% of the notified amount of the sale will be allotted to eligible individuals and institutions. Sample Tender Forms and the revised scheme of Non-competitive bidding facility is available on the website **www.rbi.org.in.**

Sd/- (Ikram Shariff)
Joint Secretary to Government
(Budget & Resources), Finance Department

DIPR/CP/5482/Zen/2025-26

FINANCE COMMISSION IMPACT

16th FC will have impact on Himachal's economy: CM

SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Sunday said the report of the 16th Finance Commission would have far-reaching implications for the state's economy, including a direct bearing on the Budget for the financial year 2026–27.

His remarks came after a detailed presentation by the state Finance Department on Himachal Pradesh's financial position and the impact of the abolition of the Revenue Deficit Grant (RDG).

Addressing the issue, the Chief Minister said the removal of RDG was not merely a concern for the state government but a matter affecting the rights of the people of Himachal Pradesh. We are ready to go to Delhi and meet the Prime Minister along with BJP MPs and MLAs to raise this issue. Once the provision of RDG is gone, it will be extremely difficult to reclaim the rights of the people, Sukhu said.

He expressed disappointment over the absence of BJP MLAs at the presentation, stating that the matter transcended political differences. Sukhu pointed out that while RDG has been scrapped for 17 states, Himachal Pradesh is among the worst affected, as 12.7 per cent of its annual budget depended on the grant — the second highest share in the country.

Highlighting structural challenges, the Chief Minister said that tax collection growth in the post-GST era had fallen to around 8 per cent, compared to 13–14 per cent prior to the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax. He noted that as a producer state with a population of only about 75 lakh, Himachal Pradesh had been adversely impacted by GST, which is largely a consumption-based tax. He added that the state's authority to impose certain taxes had also been curtailed under the GST regime.

Calling for collective action, Sukhu said the Centre should ensure at least 50 per cent royalty from hydropower projects and return all power projects that have completed 40 years of commissioning to the state. He also raised the issue of long-pending dues, stating that Rs 4,500 crore in arrears from the Bhakra Beas Management Board had not been paid to Himachal Pradesh since 2012 despite a Supreme Court verdict.

Prez Murmu pays tribute to Dr Zakir Husain

NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday paid floral tributes to former President Dr Zakir Husain on his birth anniversary at Rashtrapati Bhavan, an official said. Dr Zakir Husain served as the third President of India, holding office from May 13, 1967, until his demise on May 3, 1969. He was the first Muslim to serve as President of the country.

Born on February 8, 1897, in Hyderabad, Dr Husain was not only an eminent Indian politician but also a distinguished educationist and intellectual whose influence transcended political boundaries and generations.

After receiving his early education in Hyderabad, Dr Husain proceeded to Aligarh Muslim University, where he earned a PhD in Economics. His strong interest in education and intellectual pursuits led him to co-found the National Muslim University in Aligarh, which later shifted to Delhi and was renamed Jamia Millia Islamia.

Dr Husain's career was marked by a deep and abiding commitment to education and its pivotal role in nation-building. He served as the Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University and later as the Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia, transforming both institutions through his visionary leadership and emphasis on inclusive learning.

In addition to his work in the field of education, Dr Husain was an active participant in the Indian freedom struggle. Post-Independence, he held several significant constitutional and political positions, including Governor of Bihar from 1957 to 1962, and Vice President of India from 1962 until he assumed the presidency.

On May 13, 1967, Dr Husain was elected as the President of India, becoming the first Muslim to hold the office and also the first President to die while in office. Dr Zakir Husain passed away on May 3, 1969.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, AMRUTA SURESH BASUTKAR (Old name) address: DOLLARS COLONY GOKUL RD HUBLI. Has changed my name: AMRUTA ABHISHEK MIRAJKAR (New name) for all purposes. Vide Affidavit dated: 07/02/2026 before notary public Hubli.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, NIKHITA MOHAN BARIGALI (Old name) address: DAIMOND SANKALP APT HOSUR HUBLI. Has changed my name; NIKHITA BARIGALI (New name) for all purposes. Vide Affidavit dated: 07/02/2026 before notary public Hubli

CHANGE OF NAME
I, YASMEEN BEGUM NAZEER (Old name) address: RR COLONY RAICHUR. Has changed my name: YASMEEN BEGUM (New name) for all purposes. Vide Affidavit dated: 07/02/2026 before notary public Hubli.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, SUNANDA BHAIRSHETTY (Old name) address: SHIVAPUR COLONY GOKUL RD HUBLI. Has changed my name: SUNANDA JAGADISH MAMALEPATTANASHETTI (New name) for all purposes. Vide Affidavit dated: 07/02/2026 before notary public Hubli.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, TRIVENDRAKUMAR KHATRI (Old name) address:SHABARI NGR KESHWAPUR HUBLI. Has changed my name: TRIVENDRA KHATRI (New name) for all purposes. Vide Affidavit dated: 07/02/2026 before notary public Hubli.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, MANJUNATH MARSHI (Old name) address: NEHRU NAGAR GOKUL RD HUBLI. Has changed my name: MANJUNATH LOKAPPA MARSHI (New name) for all purposes. Vide Affidavit dated: 07/02/2026 before notary public Hubli.

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact: 080-41209042

CHANGE OF NAME
I, MADHU VEERAPPA PALLED (Old name) address: GOVANKOPPA KS TQ SONDATTI. Has changed my name: MADHU SHIVANAND BENNI (new name) for all purposes. Vide Affidavit dated: 03/02/2026 before notary public Hubli.

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
Office of the Deputy Conservator of Forests
Cauvery Wildlife Division, Kollegal
No. A2/BUD/Tender/CR-20/2025-26 Dated: 05.02.2026
Office : 08224-253027 E-Mail : dfccauverywl@gmail.com

BRIEF TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Corrigendum)

During the year 2025-26 tender has been called on 08.01.2026 through kppp Portal to taken up the rail's transportation and Construction of Railway Barricade in Halagur, Sangama and Muggur Wildlife Range of Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary. But Due to some technical reason, tender not Published, Hence Interested registered contractors can participate in the tender Publishing on 07.02.2026 through kppp Portal (http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in). for further details can contact the under signed office in the office hours.

Sd/-
Deputy Conservator of Forests,
Cauvery Wildlife Division
Kollegal

DIPR: CHANAGAR: 695/2025-26

Karnataka Forest Department
Deputy Conservator of Forests,
Office of the Forest Mobile Sqaud Bengaluru
Jarakbande Forest Residential Complex, Kammagondanahalli,
Bengaluru-560015. Ph: 080-28387672 | E-Mail: dcffms@gmail.com
No. KFD/2025-26/SE1503 Date: 05.02.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Through KPP Portal only)

The Deputy Conservator of Forests, Forest Mobile Squad, Bengaluru invites tender in three cover system for selection of **"Selection of Vendor for development of Integrated Citizen Support System"** through KPP Portal of Government of Karnataka (https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in). Prospective suppliers willing to participate in this tender shall necessarily register themselves with above mentioned KPP Portal. **Amount Put to Tender: Rs. 89.98 Lakhs. EMD : Rs. 1,00,000/-**
1) Date and Time for Pre-bid meeting: **16.02.2026, 15.30 hrs. 2)** Last date & Time for submission of Tender: **23.02.2026, 16.00 hrs. 3)** Date & Time of opening of Technical bid: **25.02.2026, 11.30 hrs. 4)** Tentative Date & Time of opening of Commercial bid: **02.03.2026, 11.30 hrs. 5)** Venue of pre-bid meeting, opening of tenders & address for communication: **Above Address**
Prospective suppliers willing to participate in this tender can download the bid documents by visiting the website **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/-
Deputy Conservator of Forests,
Forest Mobile Squad Benglauru
& Tender Inviting Authority.

DIPR/CP/JA/5518/2025-26

QUICK READ

4 B'desh nationals arrested in Mumbai for illegal stay

NEW DELHI

In a major crackdown on illegal immigration, Mumbai's Kurar Police have arrested four Bangladeshi nationals for residing unlawfully in the city using forged identity documents. The arrests were made following a series of coordinated operations carried out in Malad East's Pathanwadi area, police officials said on Sunday. According to the police, the operation was initiated after the Anti-Terrorism Cell (ATC) officer attached to Kurar Police Station received specific intelligence inputs about Bangladeshi nationals living illegally in the area and sustaining themselves using fake identities.

TN's Udangudi thermal plant enters first trial phase

CHENNAI

Trial operations have commenced at the first 660 MW unit of the Udangudi Supercritical Thermal Power Plant in Thoothukudi district, marking a significant step toward strengthening Tamil Nadu's power generation capacity. Officials indicated that the unit is progressing steadily and is likely to be commissioned by March. The Udangudi project, executed by Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Power Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO), consists of two supercritical units of 660 MW each.

Fire breaks out in moving train in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer

JAISALMER

A fire broke out in a moving train in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer on Sunday, causing widespread panic, officials said, adding that no casualties have been reported so far and that the blaze was swiftly contained. The fire erupted beneath a coach of the Swarn Nagari Express, which was travelling from Delhi to Jaisalmer. The incident occurred near Jetha Chandan Railway Station in Jaisalmer. As soon as the loco pilot realised the danger, he showed presence of mind and immediately stopped the train at a safe place, thus averting a major accident, an official said.

NDA hails US Trade Pact, slams Cong for opposing it

NDA leaders lauded the India–US trade pact as a landmark step for India's economy and accused Cong of pessimism and ignoring economic benefits.

NEW DELHI

Leaders of the National Democratic Alliance on Sunday welcomed the newly announced India–US Interim Trade Agreement, calling it a landmark step for India's economy while sharply criticising the Indian National Congress for opposing what they described as a historic pact.

JD(U) spokesperson Neeraj Kumar said the Congress should reflect on its own record before questioning the agreement between India and the United States. He pointed out that when Congress was in power, it backed the India–US nuclear deal despite controversies around national sovereignty and information sharing. At that time, Congress supported the US nuclear deal, but today they are pointing out shortcomings in the India–US trade pact, Kumar said, calling the party's stance inconsistent.

BJP National Spokesperson C. R. Kesavan echoed the criticism, accusing Congress of what he termed politics of pessimism. He said the party was facing a credibility crisis and claimed many people no longer trusted statements made by Rahul Gandhi. Kesavan argued that the Congress appeared hostile whenever India made progress, adding that the trade deal would benefit farmers, fishermen, skilled workers, and a wide section of the population.

Highlighting the economic impact of the agreement, JD(U) national spokesperson Rajiv Ranjan said the pact would significantly boost India's trade with the US. For our business with America, only a few items have an 18 per cent tariff, which is big news for India, he said, noting that reduced duties would improve competitiveness for Indian exporters.

UP Minister Om Prakash Rajbhar underlined the strategic and diplomatic importance of the agreement, linking it to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's global outreach. He said Modi's foreign visits often conveyed India's message of peace and harmony, adding that the trade deal was part of that broader effort.

The India–US Interim Trade Agreement framework aims to cut tariffs on Indian goods from 25 per cent to 18 per cent, with particular benefits for agricultural produce, industrial goods, and food items.

Kolkata cops nab 2 in Patuli minor gangrape case

KOLKATA

The Kolkata Police have apprehended two men in relation to the gang-rape of a minor in the Patuli area of the capital city, officials said on Sunday.

According to police sources, the minor girl was allegedly taken to a secluded room in the Patuli police station area in south Kolkata on the pretext of going out for a stroll on the eve of Saraswati Puja (January 22) and then was gang-raped.

A written complaint was filed by the victim's family at the Patuli police station after the incident. Based on the complaint, the police launched an investigation. The accused persons had been absconding since the incident, and the police arrested both.

Cases have already been registered against the arrested individuals under charges of gang-rape, sexual assault and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The police have also started interrogating the two arrested men.

The two accused have been identified as Akash Halder and Pradip Mandal.

Police said that on the evening before the recent Saraswati Puja, the two men took the minor girl to a secluded room in the area.

It is alleged that after consuming alcohol, the accused gang-raped the minor. Furthermore, they allegedly threatened her to prevent her from telling anyone about the incident.

The victim was terrified by the ordeal. However, she fell ill after returning home and a day later recounted the entire incident to her family.

Following this, the family of the minor lodged a formal complaint at the Patuli police station, and the police launched an investigation.

However, the two accused fled the area soon after the incident.

The police launched a search and finally arrested them Yesterday.

Himanta escalates attack on Cong MP Gogoi over Pak embassy visit

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday intensified his criticism of Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi, alleging that the latter's visit to the Pakistan Embassy in New Delhi in 2015 raised serious political and national security concerns and warranted a wider investigation.

Speaking to reporters, Sarma said the issue resurfaced after a photograph went viral on social media showing Gogoi accompanying a group of youths to the Pakistan Embassy New Delhi. According to the Chief Minister, Abdul Basit, who was serving as Pakistan's High Commissioner to India at the time, was also present during the interaction.

Sarma argued that such engagement could not be dismissed as routine or innocuous, given what he described as the sensitive and adversarial nature of relations between India and Pakistan. He said any interaction involving Indian political leaders and Pakistan's official establishment required careful scrutiny.

Recalling the 1999 Kargil War, the Chief Minister referred to the sacrifice of Captain Jintu Gogoi from Assam, who laid down his life for the nation along with several other soldiers. He said such historical experiences heightened public sensitivity around dealings with Pakistan.

Everyone is aware of the kind of relationship India shares with Pakistan. During Operation Sindoor, the entire country stood firmly behind the Prime Minister. That reflects the sentiment of the nation, Sarma said, underscoring the emotional and political weight associated with any engagement with Pakistani officials.

The Chief Minister further claimed that no other senior leader of the Indian National Congress had ever visited Pakistan or interacted with its diplomatic mission in a similar manner while leading or accompanying a delegation. He also acknowledged that he initially believed the photograph circulating online was fabricated.

For a long time, I was under the impression that the photograph was photoshopped. However, after two or three days, leaders from the Congress themselves began acknowledging it. That is when I realised that the photograph was genuine, Sarma said.

According to the Chief Minister, once the authenticity of the photograph was established, the matter could no longer be viewed in isolation. He said this prompted authorities to widen the scope of the inquiry.

Gogoi blasts Sarma, rubbishes Pak link charge

GUWAHATI

Assam Congress chief and Lok Sabha MP Gaurav Gogoi on Sunday hit out at Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over the press conference, levelling grave allegations against him, calling it worse than a C-grade cinema.

CM Sarma stated that the allegations concerning Pakistani national Ali Tauqeer Sheikh and Elizabeth Gogoi, who is the spouse of Deputy Leader of Congress in the Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi, are of a very serious nature and should not be regarded as a trivial issue.

Addressing reporters, CM Sarma said the involvement of a sitting Member of Parliament elevated the issue beyond the purview of a routine investigation.

These are grave allegations. When a sitting MP, who is also the Deputy Leader of the Congress party in Parliament, is linked to Pakistan in any manner, the matter automatically assumes greater significance, the Chief Minister said.

Reacting to this, Gogoi took to X and said, I pity the journalists from Delhi and Assam who had to suffer the most flop press conference of the century. This was worse than a C grade cinema. Most mindless and bogus points offered by the so called political shrewd Chief Minister.

This Super Flop is in contrast to our Xomoy Parivartan Yatra which has been a hit in uncovering the 12,000 bighas of land occupied by the Chief Minister and his family members, he added.

Sarma revealed that the case was initially examined by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted by the Assam Police. Based on the findings of the SIT, a formal case was subsequently registered at the CID police station for further inquiry.

According to the CM, the SIT submitted its report to the state government, following which the matter was placed before the Assam Cabinet. After deliberations, the Cabinet concluded that the scope, sensitivity and wider implications of the allegations necessitated an investigation by a central agency.

CM Sarma said the issue came to light after a photograph went viral on social media showing Gogoi accompanying a group of youths to the Pakistan Embassy.

Assam SIT probe poses questions on Gogoi's links

GUWAHATI

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the alleged Pakistan links of Gaurav Gogoi and his wife Elizabeth Gogoi, identified Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, a Pakistani national and advisor to Pakistan's Planning Commission, as the central handler in the case.

Sheikh is a close associate of Elizabeth Gogoi and the founder of LEAD Pakistan, the same NGO where the Congress MP's wife worked.

According to the SIT filings, Sheikh's social media postings include exhaustive commentary on India's internal affairs and parliamentary matters. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday asserted that Sheikh's online activity raises serious concerns about his intent to undermine India's interests, as he repeatedly weighed in on domestic political and security issues.

The SIT findings stated that Sheikh has cultivated networks of Indian contacts through climate-change forums and think-tank groups.

According to the SIT probe, Sheikh and Elizabeth Gogoi participated in the CDKN climate network that straddles India and Pakistan. Assam officials allege Sheikh used these connections to groom like-minded activists and influence policy discussions in India.

An official release cited by the SIT warned that Ali Sheikh's anti-India agenda was being aided by sympathisers within Assam and across India.

SIR HEARING WOES CONTINUE

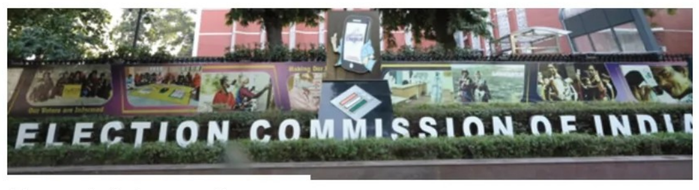
Bengal SIR: Uncertainty looms over extension of voters' list hearings

KOLKATA

Uncertainty has persisted in West Bengal following the conclusion of the deadline for hearings on claims and objections to the draft voters' list, with the process still incomplete in around 15 Assembly constituencies spread across three electoral districts.

The lack of clarity has raised questions about whether the deadline for the hearings will be extended and, if so, how broadly the extension will apply.

The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of West Bengal, Manoj Kumar Agarwal, has formally sought a seven-day extension to complete the pending hearing process. However, officials said that no response has yet been received from the headquarters of the Election Commission of India (ECI) in New Delhi, leaving election authorities in Kolkata in a state of limbo.



Uncertainty continues in West Bengal as delays persist over extending hearings on claims and objections to voters' lists.

Insiders in the CEO's office said the ongoing confusion revolves around two key issues. The first is the possible new deadline for completing the hearing exercise if an extension is approved. The second is whether such an extension would apply only to the 15 Assembly constituencies where hearings remain pending, or whether it would be extended across the entire state.

Officials warned that if the ECI opts for a statewide extension, it would inevitably delay the publication of the final voters' list, which is currently scheduled for February 14. In case the ECI opts for the second option, there will be a proportionate delay in the publication of the final voters' list, an insider from the CEO's office explained.

The constituencies where hearings are yet to be completed are largely concentrated in three electoral districts: minority-dominated Malda, coast-bordering South 24 Parganas, and Kolkata Uttar. Election officials said logistical challenges and lower-than-expected turnout for hearings contributed to the delays in these areas.

Meanwhile, the scale of potential deletions from the voters' list has drawn attention. More than 4,00,000 voters have already been identified as eligible for deletion after failing to appear for hearing sessions despite being served follow-up notices. Of these, around 50,000 are categorised as unmapped voters, while nearly 3,50,000 fall under logical discrepancy cases. Unmapped voters are those who could not establish a linkage with the 2002 voters' list through either self-mapping or progeny mapping.

Delhi Crime Branch busts high-profile cyber fraud module; arrests 3

NEW DELHI

The Crime Branch of Delhi Police has busted a high-profile cyber fraud module with international linkages and arrested three individuals allegedly involved in a well-organised cyber-financial racket.

The breakthrough was achieved by the Northern Range-1 (NR-1) team as part of its ongoing 'Cy-Hawk' operations, officials said on Sunday.

According to an official press release, an E-FIR No. 53/2025 dated December 17, 2025, was registered at Police Station Crime Branch under Sections 308, 318(4), 319 and 340 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

The case was registered on the complaint of Ranjan (56), a resident of Uttam Nagar, who alleged that he was cheated of around Rs 42.5 lakh in a stock market-related cyber fraud.

Investigations revealed that the defrauded amount was routed through 36 different bank accounts. Police traced one transaction of Rs 3,74,065 credited on September 3, 2025, from the complainant's account at Kotak Mahindra Bank to a UCO Bank account at R.K. Puram.

The amount was withdrawn the same day using a cheque. The beneficiary account was found to be in the name of Sabbir Ahmed, a resident of Munirka Village in south-west Delhi.

A special team was constituted under Inspector Ajay Kumar Sharma, under the overall supervision of ACP Ashok Sharma. Sabbir Ahmed was arrested on January 21, 2026. During interrogation, he disclosed that he had opened nine to ten bank accounts across different banks and handed over the bank kits to Md. Sarfaraz (31) and Md. Dilshad (21), residents of Batla House.

He further revealed that he received a commission of about two per cent of the cheated amount.

Based on his disclosure, Sarfaraz and Dilshad were arrested on February 5. Their interrogation led to a major breakthrough, with both accused revealing international cyber-financial links.

Police said the duo admitted to selling USDT cryptocurrency to Chinese nationals, thereby establishing links with handlers based in China.

The accused also confessed to arranging dummy candidates and facilitating the opening of multiple bank accounts by coordinating with bank officials.

QUICK READ

China bans under-18 from visiting monasteries

BEIJING

The Chinese government has reportedly increased restrictions on religious life among Tibetans by imposing a ban that stops children below 18 from entering monasteries. This development was revealed after a video surfaced on messaging platform WeChat, sparking concerns over violations of Tibetan cultural and religious rights, as per reports. Notices stating "Children under 18 are not allowed" have been reportedly placed at the entrance of a monastery in Kham, indicating the stringent enforcement of China's long-standing policies of restricting participation of minorities in religious activities.

Modi departs for India after concluding Malaysia visit

KUALA LUMPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday departed for India after concluding his two-day visit to Malaysia. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated that PM Modi's visit to Malaysia produced significant outcomes that will add substantial strength to bilateral ties. A memorable visit concludes! After a successful visit to Malaysia, marked by special warmth and hospitality and anchored in our close cultural bonds, PM Narendra Modi has departed for India. The visit produced significant outcomes that will add substantial strength to India–Malaysia ties," Jaiswal posted on X.

B'desh elections: Female candidates face cyber abuse

DHAKA

As Bangladesh heads into a high-stakes election, women candidates are confronting a wave of cyber harassment, coordinated online abuse and misinformation, as per reports. Women account for just around four per cent of candidates in the upcoming polls, exposing entrenched gender barriers in a political landscape where women form half the population but barely figure on the ballot. Several women candidates across constituencies have reported cyberbullying, character assassination, sexual harassment and threats, both online and ofline.

Thailand votes in 3-way race under military scrutiny

Thai voters turned out Sunday for a snap general election amid instability, nationalism, and a fragmented three-way contest

BANGKOK

Voters across Thailand went to the polls on Sunday in a high-stakes general election shaped by a fierce three-way contest among conservative, progressive, and populist political camps.

With opinion polls and analysts broadly agreeing that no single party is likely to win an outright majority, the election outcome is expected to usher in a prolonged period of negotiations and political uncertainty, reviving long-standing concerns about instability in the country's governance.

The snap election was called in mid-December by Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, a move that surprised both opposition parties and some allies within the ruling coalition. The decision came at a time when tensions were escalating along the border with Cambodia, following a series of confrontations that dominated domestic headlines and fueled nationalist sentiment. Political analysts say the timing of the election was strategic, allowing the conservative leadership to appeal to voters through themes of national security, unity, and strong leadership during a period of external threat.

The conservative bloc has sought to position itself as the guarantor of stability and sovereignty, emphasizing its experience in governance and its role in managing the border crisis. Campaign rallies highlighted the need for continuity and decisive action, arguing that a fragmented parliament could weaken Thailand's ability to respond to regional challenges.

Opposing them, progressive parties have campaigned on promises of political reform, reduced military influence in civilian affairs, and expanded civil liberties. They have drawn strong support from younger voters and urban constituencies, framing the election as a chance to break with decades of elite-dominated politics. Meanwhile, populist parties have focused on economic concerns, pledging higher welfare spending, debt relief, and measures to ease the cost-of-living pressures affecting rural and working-class voters.

Election officials reported steady turnout throughout the day, reflecting the public's keen interest in the vote despite widespread expectations of a hung parliament. Observers noted that coalition-building could take weeks, if not months, as parties negotiate alliances in a deeply polarized political landscape.

Japan's Takaichi set to secure big majority in lower house

TOKYP

Takaichi's Liberal Democratic Party is set to win 274 to 328 of the 465 seats in the chamber, well above the 233 needed for a majority.

Japan's ruling party is poised for a commanding victory after voters went to the polls on Sunday, with public broadcaster NHK projecting a large parliamentary majority for Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi.

Based on nationwide exit polls, NHK forecast that the Liberal Democratic Party will comfortably clear the threshold needed to govern, reinforcing expectations of political continuity in the world's fourth-largest economy.

According to the broadcaster, Takaichi's Liberal Democratic Party is set to win between 274 and 328 of the 465 seats in the powerful lower house of parliament. That tally is well above the 233 seats required for an outright majority, giving the ruling bloc a strong mandate and significant room to maneuver when advancing legislation and shaping national policy.

The snap election was called amid rare winter conditions and at a time of high personal popularity for the prime minister. Takaichi, 64, Japan's first female leader, decided to dissolve parliament to capitalise on buoyant approval ratings that have remained strong since she assumed leadership of the LDP late last year. Analysts say the move was designed to secure a fresh and stable mandate before economic headwinds or political challenges could erode public support.

During the campaign, Takaichi emphasised economic resilience, wage growth, and national security, arguing that a strong and unified government was essential to navigate global uncertainty and regional tensions. Her message appeared to resonate with voters seeking stability, particularly as Japan faces rising living costs, an ageing population, and complex geopolitical dynamics in East Asia.

Opposition parties struggled to gain traction against the ruling party's momentum, despite raising concerns about income inequality, government transparency, and the concentration of power. While heavy snowfall in parts of the country disrupted travel and threatened turnout in some rural areas, exit polls suggest the weather did little to blunt support for the LDP overall.

The election determines control of the lower house of the National Diet, which holds decisive authority over the prime minister's appointment and the passage of budgets and key legislation. A decisive majority would allow Takaichi to govern with fewer compromises and pursue longer-term reforms.

Christchurch mosque terrorist set to appear in Court of Appeal

CHRISTCHURCH

New Zealand's justice system is set to revisit one of the darkest chapters in the country's history, as courts prepare to hear an appeal by the man responsible for the Christchurch mosque attacks. The appeal challenges the sentence imposed on the shooter, who carried out the deadliest mass shooting ever recorded in New Zealand.

The attacks took place in March 2019, when a lone gunman opened fire at the Al Noor Mosque and the Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch during Friday prayers. Fifty-one people were killed and dozens more injured in an assault that shocked the nation and drew global condemnation. The attack was livestreamed online, amplifying its impact and prompting international debates.

In 2020, the attacker was sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, a punishment that was unprecedented in New Zealand's legal history. The judge described the crimes as "wicked beyond words" and said a whole-life sentence was the only adequate response given the scale, planning, and ideological motivation behind the violence. The ruling was widely seen as reflecting the gravity of the offence and the suffering inflicted on victims, survivors, and their families.

Meloni slams anti-Olympics protesters after Milan clashes

MILAN

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has sharply criticised anti-Olympics protesters, calling them "enemies of Italy" following violent clashes in Milan and acts of sabotage targeting the national rail network. The incidents unfolded late Saturday night on the first full day of competition in the Winter Games jointly hosted by Milan and the Alpine resort of Cortina d'Ampezzo.

The protests took place in Milan, Italy's financial capital and one of the main hubs for the Games. What began as a large demonstration over rising housing costs and environmental concerns linked to Olympic-related development escalated when a smaller group broke away from the main march. According to police, around 100 protesters hurled firecrackers, smoke bombs, and bottles at officers, triggering a tense standoff in the city centre.

Law enforcement responded by deploying water cannon to disperse the crowd and restore order. Authorities said six people were detained in connection with the violence. In parallel, sabotage attacks were reported on parts of the national rail network, where cables were cut to prevent trains from departing, disrupting travel at a critical moment as athletes, officials, and spectators moved between venues.

In a strongly worded message posted on Instagram on Sunday, Meloni praised the thousands of Italians working behind the scenes to ensure the Games run smoothly and to showcase the country positively on the global stage. She contrasted their efforts with what she described as deliberate attempts to damage Italy's image abroad. "Then there are those who are enemies of Italy and Italians," she wrote, accusing protesters of ensuring that scenes of violence and disruption were broadcast worldwide.

Officials said an estimated 10,000 people participated in the broader demonstration, much of which remained peaceful.

Organisers said the protest aimed to highlight concerns about soaring rents, displacement of residents, and environmental impacts associated with large-scale Olympic infrastructure projects. Critics of the Games argue that public funds should instead be directed toward affordable housing and sustainable urban development.

Man suspected of shooting GRU officer extradited from Dubai

MOSCOW

Russian security services announced on Sunday that a Ukrainian-born Russian citizen has been extradited from Dubai to Moscow on suspicion of gravely injuring one of the country's most senior military intelligence officials.

The case has heightened tensions between Russia and Ukraine, with Moscow alleging Kyiv's involvement and Ukrainian authorities denying the claim.

According to investigators, Lieutenant General Vladimir Alexeyev, 64, the deputy head of Russia's GRU military intelligence service, was shot three times on Friday inside an apartment block on the Volokolamsk Highway in northern Moscow. The attack was carried out using a Makarov pistol fitted with a silencer, investigators said. Alexeyev was rushed to hospital and underwent emergency surgery. Russian media reported that he remains under medical supervision.

The Federal Security Service (FSB) said the suspect, identified as Lyubomir Korba, was detained in Dubai and later extradited to Russia. In a statement, the FSB described Korba as a Russian citizen born in 1960 in the Ternopil region of what was then Soviet Ukraine. Investigators allege that Korba was tasked by Ukrainian intelligence services with carrying out the shooting.

Russian authorities have directly blamed Ukraine for orchestrating the attack, portraying it as part of a broader campaign targeting senior figures within Russia's security establishment. Kyiv has firmly denied any involvement, dismissing the allegations as unsubstantiated.

State media broadcast footage showing masked FSB officers escorting a blindfolded man from a small jet after landing in Russia at night, images clearly intended to underscore the seriousness of the case and the speed of the extradition. Officials did not disclose further details about the legal process that led to Korba's transfer from the United Arab Emirates.

4 Indian students hurt in knife attack at Russian Medical University

MOSCOW

Four Indian students were injured in a knife attack at a medical university in Russia's Bashkortostan region on Saturday, prompting responses from both Russian authorities and the Indian diplomatic mission in Moscow. The incident occurred in the city of Ufa, the regional capital, and has raised concerns over the safety of international students studying in the country.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the Indian Embassy in Moscow confirmed that Indian nationals were among those hurt in what it described as an "unfortunate incident." "An unfortunate incident of attack has occurred in Ufa. Several persons including four Indian students have been injured," the embassy said, adding that it was in close contact with local authorities and monitoring the situation.

Russian investigators said the attack took place at a medical university, where a 15-year-old suspect allegedly assaulted students with a knife. Officials did not immediately disclose a motive for the attack or provide details on how the suspect obtained the weapon. The case is being handled by regional law enforcement agencies, and a criminal investigation has been launched.

According to preliminary information, the injured students received medical treatment, and their condition was not described as life-threatening. Russian authorities said emergency services responded quickly, and the suspect was detained shortly after the incident. Security measures at the university were reportedly tightened following the attack.

The Bashkortostan region, located in Russia's Volga-Ural area, hosts a number of higher education institutions that attract foreign students, including many from India pursuing medical degrees.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

	4		1		9		5	
2		8		9		3		6
1		9		3	2		8	
	2		3				9	
5		4		8		1		2
8		1		2		6		
	7		8		3		2	
9		2		5		4		3
	1		2		9		6	

1	5	6	2	3	9	7	8	4
7	4	3	8	5	6	9	2	1
9	8	2	1	4	7	5	6	3
3	7	5	4	1	2	8	9	6
6	1	4	9	7	8	2	3	5
2	9	8	3	6	5	4	1	7
4	6	9	7	8	3	1	5	2
5	2	1	6	9	4	3	7	8
8	3	7	5	2	1	6	4	9

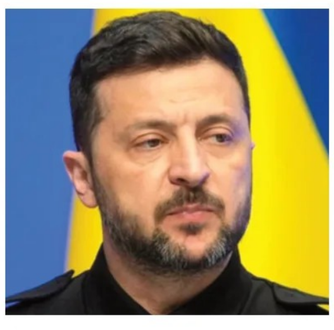
Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

NATION FIRST

Ukraine sanctions firms aiding Russia's weapon production

KYIV



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Sunday that Ukraine is imposing fresh sanctions on a number of foreign manufacturers accused of supplying critical components used in Russian drones and missiles deployed against Ukrainian territory. The move is aimed at tightening pressure on international supply chains that Kyiv says continue to fuel Moscow's military capabilities despite wide-ranging Western restrictions. In a statement posted on X, Zelenskiy said the production of Russian weaponry would not be possible without access to key foreign-made parts. He accused Russia of systematically bypassing existing sanctions to obtain advanced components needed for missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles used in strikes across Ukraine. "Producing this weaponry would be impossible without critical foreign components, which the Russians continue to obtain by circumventing sanctions," he wrote.

The Ukrainian leader said the new measures specifically target companies involved in supplying components, as well as firms directly engaged in missile and drone manufacturing. "We are introducing new sanctions precisely against such companies – component suppliers, as well as missile and drone manufacturers. I have signed the relevant decisions," Zelenskiy added, without publicly naming the firms affected.

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, Ukraine and its allies have repeatedly highlighted the role of foreign electronics, navigation systems, and microchips found in the wreckage of Russian missiles and drones. Ukrainian officials say investigations have traced many of these parts back to manufacturers and distributors based outside Russia, often routed through third countries to evade controls.

The sanctions come as Russia has intensified its use of drones and long-range missiles against Ukrainian cities, energy infrastructure, and military targets. Kyiv has warned that continued access to foreign components enables Moscow to replenish its arsenal and sustain high-intensity attacks, prolonging the war and increasing civilian suffering.

QUICK READ

China's forced labour policy poses moral, economic challenge

Beijing

The Chinese government's exploitation of the Uyghur people has emerged as a major cause for concern worldwide. The large-scale suppression of the Uyghur minority, with people subjected to arbitrary incarceration, forced labour, and family separation in work camps constitute a horrific violation of human rights. The forced labour also poses an economic security challenge as it enables China to flood global markets with artificially cheap goods that undercut businesses in the US and other countries, while it tightens Chinese control over minerals vital to aerospace, defence and consumer products required in the rest of the world.

CII air corridor plan for NCR to cut transit time

New Delhi

The Apex Business Chamber CII has prepared a roadmap for setting up a scalable model pilot air corridor connecting Gurugram, Connaught Place, and Jewar International Airport to reduce transit time and provide a high-impact solution to urban congestion. The CII report titled 'Navigating the Future of Advanced Air Mobility in India', launched by Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu, is also expected to contribute to India's Net-Zero 2070 goals through zero-emission electric Vertical Take-Off and Landing (eVTOL) aircraft technology. Setting up a clearly defined and empowered AAM regulatory function within the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) will ensure the safe and efficient integration of Advanced Air Mobility solutions like Electric Vertical Take Off and Landing (eVTOL).

Centre seeks inputs on proposed income-tax rules, forms

New Delhi

The government is seeking inputs from various stakeholders on the rules and forms in the Income-tax Act, 2025, which will come into effect from April 1, 2026, it was announced on Sunday. Before the final notification of the Income Tax Rules and Forms, to encourage wider stakeholder participation, the proposed Income Tax Rules and Forms have been uploaded on the official website, according to Finance Ministry on Sunday. The corresponding Income-tax Rules and related Forms have been prepared after broad-based consultation to align with the provisions of the Income-tax Act, 2025.

US tariff cut brings fresh hope to Bhadohi carpet exporters

The pact has infused fresh energy among carpet manufacturers across the Bhadohi carpet hub, benefit 2.5 million weavers.

BHADOHI

A wave of optimism has swept through the carpet industry in Bhadohi following the recent India-US trade deal and a sharp reduction in tariffs on Indian products. Exporters in the globally renowned carpet hub say the development could boost business by up to 20 per cent, describing the moment as akin to Diwali for a sector that has struggled through months of uncertainty. Local exporters have credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the breakthrough, praising what they described as his balanced diplomatic approach and sustained engagement with Washington. They also congratulated Union Ministers Piyush Goyal and Giriraj Singh for their role in supporting exporters and pushing for relief measures.

Under the revised trade arrangement, the United States administration has reduced tariffs on Indian carpet exports

to 18 per cent and has indicated the possibility of lowering them further to zero in select sectors. Exporters say the move provides significant relief and restores competitiveness for Indian carpets in the crucial American market.

Bhadohi, often referred to as India's carpet capital, supports lakhs of weavers and hundreds of exporting firms. The industry, however, suffered a severe setback after the US sharply raised import duties to as high as 50 per cent, including a 25 per cent penalty. The steep hike nearly brought exports to a standstill, forcing many exporters to scale back operations and leaving thousands of weavers facing reduced work and income insecurity.

Before the tariff increase, the US accounted for nearly 60 to 65 per cent of India's total carpet exports. Demand from American buyers slumped dramatically after the duties were imposed, with many orders either cancelled or diverted to other countries.

Industry confidence began to revive at the start of 2026, when, following India's diplomatic outreach, US President Donald Trump announced a reduction in overall tariffs to 18 per cent and hinted at further cuts. Exporters say enquiries from US buyers are gradually increasing, signalling a slow but steady recovery.

FACT FILE

- Indian carpets will now face lower US tariffs, dropping from 50% to 18%.
- This significant reduction offers substantial relief to the nation's carpet industry.
- The move is expected to directly benefit approximately 2.5 million weavers.
- The Carpet Export Promotion Council expressed gratitude for the efforts leading to this positive development.

UIDAI crosses 1-cr biometric updates for schoolchildren nationwide

NEW DELHI

The large-scale drive was launched in September 2025 after UIDAI successfully integrated its systems with the UDISE+ application

In a significant milestone under its mission-mode outreach, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has completed more than one crore Mandatory Biometric Updates (MBUs) for schoolchildren across India.

The achievement covers students enrolled in nearly 83,000 schools nationwide, according to a statement released by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology on Sunday.

The large-scale drive was launched in September 2025 after UIDAI successfully integrated its systems with the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) application. This technological integration proved to be a key breakthrough, as it enabled schools and authorities to track the MBU status of children in real time. Using this data, schools and UIDAI jointly identified students due for biometric updates and organised on-site camps to complete the process efficiently.

Under existing Aadhaar norms, children below the age of five are enrolled using demographic details such as name, date of birth, address, photograph, and birth certificate. Fingerprints and iris scans are not collected at that stage, as biometric traits are not fully developed. As a result, biometric updates are mandatory when a child crosses the ages of five and fifteen, making MBUs a crucial requirement for maintaining a valid Aadhaar record.

UIDAI has warned that failure to complete MBUs can create difficulties in Aadhaar-based authentication, potentially affecting access to government welfare schemes and participation in major examinations such as NEET, JEE, and CUET, as well as university admissions.

To encourage participation and improve accessibility, UIDAI waived the charges for MBUs for children in the 7–15 age group from October 1, 2025, for a period of one year. Biometric updates for children aged 5–7 and 15–17 years continue to remain free of cost.

Beyond school-based camps, children have also been completing MBUs at Aadhaar enrolment centres and Aadhaar Seva Kendras across the country. Around 1.3 crore additional MBU transactions were recorded during the same period through these centres, reflecting strong nationwide uptake.

Julius Baer CEO calls for Swiss public register of rogue bankers

DAVOS

Switzerland should introduce a public register listing bankers who have violated professional duties, according to a senior executive at one of the country's leading private banks, as the nation continues efforts to rebuild confidence in its financial sector after the collapse of Credit Suisse.

Stefan Bollinger, director at Zurich-based private bank Julius Baer, said such a register would help prevent repeat misconduct and strengthen accountability across the financial system. Speaking in an interview with Swiss-German newspaper Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Bollinger argued that transparency around professional breaches is essential to

restoring the credibility of Switzerland's banking industry.

Registering financial market participants has clear advantages, Bollinger said. This prevents bad actors from simply crossing to the other side of the street and carrying on as if nothing had happened. His remarks reflect growing concern within Switzerland's financial community that existing oversight mechanisms have failed to adequately deter misconduct or hold individuals accountable.

The proposal comes amid heightened scrutiny of Switzerland's banking culture following the dramatic downfall of Credit Suisse, once a pillar of the country's financial system. Its collapse sent shockwaves through global markets and damaged the reputation of Switzerland as a haven of stability, prudence, and strong regulation.

Critics have long argued that while Swiss regulators impose fines on institutions, individual bankers often escape lasting consequences. Bollinger suggested that a public register would complement existing regulatory tools by ensuring that serious breaches of professional duty follow individuals throughout their careers, rather than being quietly absorbed by the system.

Supporters of the idea say such a register could improve market discipline, protect clients, and reassure international investors that Switzerland is serious about reform. They note that other professions, including law and medicine, already maintain public records of disciplinary actions in many countries.

However, the proposal is likely to face resistance from parts of the banking industry and privacy advocates, who may argue that public naming could be excessive or damaging if not carefully regulated. Questions also remain about who would manage the register, what thresholds would trigger inclusion, and how long names would remain listed.

Washington Post publisher Will Lewis steps down after mass layoffs

WASHINGTON

The Washington Post announced that its publisher and chief executive officer, Will Lewis, is stepping down, bringing an end to a tenure defined by restructuring efforts and difficult cost-cutting decisions. The announcement came just days after the newspaper carried out widespread layoffs, underscoring the intense financial and strategic pressures facing one of the most prominent news organisations in the United States.

In a message to staff that was later shared online by the Post's White House bureau chief, Matt Viser, Lewis reflected on his time leading the organisation. He acknowledged the controversial nature of recent decisions but said they were necessary to secure the paper's long-term viability. During my tenure, difficult decisions have been taken in order to ensure the sustainable future of The Post so it can for many years ahead publish high-quality nonpartisan news to millions of customers each day, Lewis wrote.

Lewis took over at a time when the Washington Post, like much of the global media industry, has been grappling with declining print revenues, slower digital subscription growth, and rising operational costs. The layoffs announced earlier this week were part of broader efforts to streamline operations and adapt to changing reader habits in an increasingly competitive digital news environment.

While the newspaper did not immediately announce a successor, the leadership transition adds another layer of uncertainty for staff already shaken by job cuts. Employees have voiced concerns in recent months about morale, newsroom resources, and the challenge of maintaining the Post's journalistic standards amid financial strain.

The Washington Post, owned by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, has long been regarded as a pillar of American journalism, particularly for its coverage of politics, national security, and investigations. However, even high-profile outlets have struggled in recent years as advertising revenue has shifted to technology platforms and audiences have become more fragmented.

Lewis's departure has sparked debate within media circles about leadership accountability and the sustainability of traditional news organisations. Supporters argue that tough restructuring was unavoidable given market realities, while critics say repeated layoffs risk weakening the newsroom and eroding public trust.

Trump claims inflation victory nearly 20 times even as prices bite

LOWA

Former US President Donald Trump has positioned himself as the Republican Party's chief messenger on the cost of living in an election year, but a review of his recent speeches suggests a striking disconnect between his rhetoric and the everyday experiences of many Americans.

According to a Reuters review of Trump's public remarks, he has repeatedly declared inflation beaten or way down, even as households continue to grapple with high prices for essentials such as food, housing, and healthcare. In five speeches focused on the economy since December, Trump asserted that inflation had been defeated or sharply reduced nearly 20 times. During the same appearances, he claimed prices were falling almost 30 times, statements that economists say are not supported by official data.

While inflation in the United States has eased from its peak levels, prices remain significantly higher than they were before the pandemic. Many voters say their wages have not kept pace with the cumulative rise in costs, leaving them feeling financially stretched despite improving headline inflation figures. Surveys consistently show that concerns about the cost of living remain one of the top issues for American voters heading into the election.

Despite these anxieties, much of Trump's speech time was not devoted to detailed economic policy proposals or acknowledgements of lingering financial strain. Instead, large portions were spent airing personal grievances and addressing unrelated topics. These included sharp attacks on political opponents, repeated focus on immigration, and digressions on foreign policy issues, such as questioning whether Somalia qualified as a country.

Critics argue that Trump's messaging risks alienating voters who feel their struggles are being dismissed. By repeatedly portraying inflation as a solved problem, they say, he appears out of step with families still cutting back on spending or relying on credit to cover basic needs. Supporters, however, contend that Trump is seeking to project confidence and contrast his economic record with that of the current administration.

Republican strategists see the economy as a central battleground in the election, believing voter dissatisfaction over prices and living standards could drive turnout. Trump's approach, emphasising perceived success and personal leadership, reflects his broader campaign style of bold claims and sharp contrasts rather than detailed policy discussions.

INDIA-MALAYSIA TIES

PM Modi calls for expansion of India–Malaysia B2B ties

Continued from page 1

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday interacted with four prominent industry leaders from Malaysia, welcoming the growing momentum in business-to-business (B2B) engagement between the two countries and underlining the strong interest of Malaysian companies in India's growth story. The interaction took place amid a broader push to deepen economic cooperation and attract foreign investment into key sectors of the Indian economy.

According to an official statement, the Prime Minister encouraged Malaysian businesses to explore opportunities in India, particularly in infrastructure development, renewable energy, digital technology, semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and healthcare. He highlighted India's expanding market size, innovation ecosystem, and long-term growth potential as major attractions for global investors.

PM Modi met senior leaders from some of Malaysia's most influential corporate groups, including PETRONAS President and Group CEO Tan Sri Tengku Muhammad Taufik, Berjaya Corporation Berhad Founder Tan Sri Dato' Seri Vincent Tan Chee Yioun, Khazanah Nasional Berhad Managing Director Dato' Amirul Feisal Wan Zahir, and Phison Electronics Founder Dato Pua Khein Seng. The discussions focused on expanding investment portfolios, enhancing technology collaboration, and exploring joint ventures with Indian partners.

The Prime Minister also outlined the reforms and initiatives undertaken in recent years to improve the ease of doing business in India. He emphasised that policy stability, regulatory transparency, and a predictable business environment have been central to India's efforts to attract long-term foreign investment and promote sustainable economic growth.

PM Modi commended the successful convening of the 10th India–Malaysia CEO Forum in Kuala Lumpur, expressing confidence that the forum's deliberations would translate into deeper trade and investment ties. Industry leaders, in turn, appreciated the reforms undertaken by the Government of India as part of its vision of a Viksit Bharat and conveyed strong confidence in India's economic trajectory.

They also expressed keen interest in expanding their business presence in India through fresh investments and collaborative ventures. Earlier, PM Modi and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim jointly condemned terrorism in all its forms, calling for zero tolerance and sustained international cooperation.

TECHNOLOGY Shaping the World

We live in an era where technology has become as fundamental to human civilization as agriculture was to our ancestors ten thousand years ago. From the moment we wake to smartphone alarms until we drift to sleep scrolling through social media, technology permeates every aspect of modern existence. But the true revolution isn't just about convenience or connectivity, it's about how technology is fundamentally restructuring society, economy, culture, and even human consciousness itself.

THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

While previous industrial revolutions mechanized production, harnessed electricity, and digitized information, we now stand at the precipice of something far more profound. The Fourth Industrial Revolution, characterized by the fusion of physical, digital, and biological worlds, is reshaping civilization at an unprecedented pace. Technologies that seemed like science fiction mere decades ago artificial intelligence, quantum computing, gene editing, and nanotechnology are now actively transforming industries and solving problems that have plagued humanity for centuries.

Consider artificial intelligence. What began as simple pattern recognition has evolved into systems that can diagnose diseases more accurately than experienced physicians, compose music indistinguishable from human composers, and even engage in nuanced conversations. AI is not replacing human intelligence but augmenting it, creating partnerships between human creativity and machine processing power that unlock solutions previously beyond our reach. From optimizing energy grids to predicting climate patterns, AI serves as humanity's cognitive extension, processing vast datasets to reveal insights.

CONNECTIVITY REDEFINING HUMAN INTERACTION

Perhaps no technological shift has been more visible than the revolution in communication. The internet, once a novelty connecting university researchers, has become humanity's nervous system. Over five billion people now access the internet regularly, forming what is essentially a global consciousness where information, ideas, and culture flow across borders instantaneously. Social media platforms have fundamentally altered how humans form communities and share experiences. Geographic limitations that once constrained human relationships have dissolved. A programmer in Mumbai collaborates in real-time with a designer in São Paulo. Families separated by oceans share daily moments through video calls. Social movements organize across continents within hours. This hyperconnectivity creates possibilities for collective action and mutual understanding that previous generations could never imagine. Yet this connectivity comes with complications. The same platforms that unite also polarize. Algorithms designed to maximize engagement often amplify extreme viewpoints and create echo chambers where people encounter only information.

HEALTHCARE REVOLUTION

Medical technology is perhaps where innovation's life-saving potential is most apparent.

Precision medicine uses genetic information to tailor treatments to individual patients, moving beyond the one-size-fits-all approach that characterized twentieth-century healthcare. CRISPR gene editing offers potential cures for genetic diseases that were once death sentences.

Immunotherapy harnesses the body's immune system to fight cancers previously considered untreatable. Telemedicine has expanded healthcare access, particularly benefiting rural and underserved populations. Patients consult specialists thousands of miles away, and AI-powered diagnostic tools assist physicians in identifying conditions earlier and more accurately.

Wearable devices continuously monitor vital signs, alerting users and doctors to potential problems before they become emergencies. Prosthetics and assistive technologies are restoring capabilities to people with disabilities.

Brain-computer interfaces allow paralyzed individuals to control robotic limbs through thought alone. Cochlear implants restore hearing. Retinal implants return sight. Technology is progressively eliminating distinctions between ability and disability, empowering people to participate fully in society regardless of physical limitations.

Economic Transformation and the Future of Work

Technology is fundamentally restructuring the global economy, creating new industries while rendering others obsolete. The gig economy, enabled by digital platforms, has redefined employment relationships. Millions now earn income through ride-sharing, freelance platforms, and digital marketplaces that didn't exist fifteen years ago. This flexibility empowers workers but also raises questions about job security, benefits, and worker protections in an increasingly fluid labor market. Automation and robotics are transforming manufacturing and logistics. Warehouses operate with minimal human intervention, with robots retrieving, sorting, and packing products. Self-driving vehicles promise to revolutionize transportation, potentially displacing millions of professional drivers while simultaneously reducing traffic accidents and optimizing cargo delivery. The challenge isn't whether these technologies will advance they will but how society manages the transition, ensuring displaced workers can retrain and find meaningful employment in emerging sectors.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

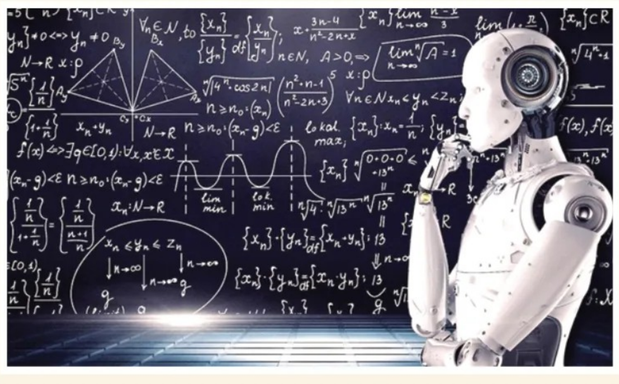
As technology shapes the world, it simultaneously creates environmental challenges and provides tools to address them. Climate change, partially driven by industrial technology, now confronts technological solutions. Renewable energy technology solar panels, wind turbines, advanced batteries is becoming cost-competitive with fossil fuels. Electric vehicles are transitioning from curiosity to mainstream, promising dramatic reductions in transportation emissions.

Precision agriculture uses sensors, drones, and data analytics to optimize crop yields while minimizing water, fertilizer, and pesticide use. Vertical farming enables food production in urban environments with dramatically reduced resource consumption. Synthetic biology is creating alternative proteins and materials, potentially reducing agriculture's environmental footprint. Technology also enables unprecedented environmental monitoring. Satellites track deforestation, ocean temperatures, and ice sheet changes. Sensor networks measure air and water quality in real-time. This data informs policy decisions and enables rapid response to environmental threats. While technology alone cannot solve environmental crises, it provides essential tools for understanding and addressing them.

Education Democratization

Technology is democratizing education in ways that would astonish previous generations. World-class lectures from prestigious universities are freely available online. Language learning apps provide personalized instruction adapting to individual learning styles. Educational platforms offer courses on virtually any topic, from quantum physics to bread baking, often at minimal cost.

This democratization extends beyond formal education. YouTube tutorials teach practical skills from car repair to coding. Online communities provide support for learners worldwide. Artificial intelligence tutors offer patient, personalized instruction available twenty-four hours daily. While traditional educational institutions retain value, technology is disrupting the monopoly they once held on knowledge transmission. Virtual and augmented reality technologies promise even more immersive learning experiences. Medical students practice surgeries on virtual patients. History students explore ancient civilizations through reconstructed environments. Engineering students visualize complex structures in three dimensions. Learning is becoming experiential in ways previously possible only through expensive physical simulations.



The Ethics and Challenges Ahead

As technology reshapes the world, it raises profound ethical questions. Artificial intelligence systems make consequential decisions about loan applications, criminal sentencing, and job candidates, but these systems can perpetuate and amplify existing biases present in their training data. Privacy increasingly seems like a relic of the twentieth century as corporations and governments collect unprecedented data about individuals' movements, communications, and preferences.

Biotechnology raises questions about human enhancement and genetic engineering. If we can edit genes to eliminate diseases, should we also enhance intelligence or physical capabilities? Where do we draw lines between therapy and enhancement? Who decides which genetic modifications are acceptable?

The digital divide remains a crucial concern. While billions enjoy internet access, billions more remain disconnected, excluded from opportunities that digital technology provides. Within connected societies, disparities persist based on education, income, and geography. Ensuring technology benefits all humanity, not just privileged segments, represents one of our generation's defining challenges.

Autonomous weapons, surveillance technology, and cyber warfare capabilities create new security dilemmas. International frameworks struggle to keep pace with technological advancement, creating regulatory vacuums where new capabilities emerge faster than governance structures can address them.

LOOKING FORWARD

Technology will continue shaping the world at accelerating pace. Quantum computers promise computational capabilities that will revolutionize drug discovery, materials science, and cryptography. Fusion energy might finally provide clean, abundant power. Brain-computer interfaces could enable direct mind-to-mind communication. Nanotechnology might allow molecular-scale manufacturing and medical interventions.

Yet technology itself is neutral—merely a tool. How we wield these tools determines whether they enhance human flourishing or exacerbate inequality and conflict. The challenge facing this generation is not just creating powerful technologies but ensuring they serve human values, respect dignity, and distribute benefits equitably.

As technology reshapes work, relationships, health, education, and environment, we must remain intentional about preserving what makes us human, creativity, empathy, ethical reasoning, and the pursuit of meaning. The future won't be determined by algorithms and machines alone but by choices humans make about the world we want technology to help create.

The digital revolution is not something happening to us but something we're collectively creating through countless individual decisions and innovations. Understanding technology's transformative power is the first step toward ensuring that power serves humanity's highest aspirations rather than its basest impulses. The world technology is shaping is ultimately the world we choose to build.

Manchester United owners bid Rs 16,300 crore to buy RCB: Reports

Glazers emerge serious contenders as race heats up to acquire RCB franchise

BENGALURU

The race to acquire Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) appears to have taken a dramatic turn, with reports suggesting that Manchester United co-owners, the Glazer family, have submitted a massive bid of $1.8 billion (approximately Rs 16,300 crore) to buy the IPL franchise.

According to a report later picked up by several UK-based publications, the Glazers have entered the fray with a valuation that could potentially outstrip other interested parties, including Serum Institute chief Adar Poonawalla. The development underlines the growing global appeal and commercial strength of Indian Premier League franchises.

The timing of the reported bid is significant. Just days ago, Smriti Mandhana-led RCB clinched their second Women's Premier League title by defeating Delhi Capitals, becoming the first franchise to hold titles in both the IPL and WPL simultaneously. The on-field success has further boosted the brand value of the Bengaluru-based outfit.

RCB is currently owned by Royal Challengers Sports Ltd, a subsidiary of Diageo. Sources indicate the owners have valued the franchise at close to $2 billion and have engaged a London-based consulting firm to assess the bids. A detailed report is expected to be submitted by March 31.

Apart from the Glazers, as many as eight other parties are believed to have submitted non-binding bids, ranging between $1 billion and $1.8 billion. The list of interested suitors reportedly includes Adar Poonawalla, the Adani Group, and JSW, among others.

The Glazers are no strangers to IPL aspirations. They had previously attempted to acquire a franchise in 2021 but missed out when Gujarat Titans and Lucknow Super Giants were awarded new teams by the BCCI. Reports also suggest they are exploring a parallel bid for Rajasthan Royals, who have reportedly received five advanced-stage offers.

Sources told DH that even if a deal is finalised, ownership of RCB is unlikely to change hands before the conclusion of the 19th edition of the IPL, scheduled to begin towards the end of March.

With elite global investors circling, RCB's future ownership battle is shaping up to be one of the biggest in IPL history.

Yamal atones for bad miss with classy goal as Barcelona beat Mallorca 3-0

MADRID

Teenage star redeems early error as Barça tighten grip atop La Liga

Teenage sensation Lamine Yamal made amends for a glaring miss with a moment of brilliance as La Liga leaders Barcelona eased past Mallorca 3-0 to open a four-point gap at the top of the table.

Barcelona struck first through Robert Lewandowski in the 29th minute after sustained pressure. Marcus Rashford, increasingly influential on the left flank, saw his initial effort blocked, but Lewandowski reacted quickest, controlling the loose ball before calmly slotting it past a defender. Rashford came close to scoring himself in first-half stoppage time when his curling free kick forced an outstanding save from goalkeeper Leo Roman. The rebound fell kindly for Jules Koundé, whose mishit effort landed at the feet of Yamal on the goal line. Incredibly, the 18-year-old skewed wide, prompting a reassuring pat on the back from Lewandowski, one of the game's most prolific modern scorers.

Yamal's response was emphatic. In the 61st minute, the prodigy showcased his class by gliding past a defender on the edge of the area before unleashing a powerful, dipping left-footed strike into the bottom corner. The shot was struck so cleanly that Roman did not move.

With the match under control, Barcelona introduced fresh legs late on. Substitute Marc Bernal, another product of the club's famed academy, capped the night in the 83rd minute with his first senior goal. A slick midfield move split Mallorca open, allowing the 18-year-old to race through, cut inside his marker and guide the ball neatly inside the post.

Yamal and Lewandowski, both now on 10 league goals for the season, were among the first to applaud Bernal's composure from the sidelines.

The win keeps Barcelona firmly in command of La Liga, though second-placed Real Madrid can cut the deficit to one point with a victory at Valencia on Sunday.

Elsewhere on Saturday, Real Sociedad climbed to eighth after a 3-1 win over Elche. Two matches — Rayo Vallecano vs Oviedo and Sevilla vs Girona — were postponed due to safety and weather concerns respectively. Barcelona also announced it has withdrawn from the proposed European Super League, formally ending its involvement in the controversial breakaway project.

Late penalty seals comeback victory as Napoli stay in Milan giants' slipstream

Højlund rescues Napoli with dramatic 3-2 win over Genoa in Serie A

GENOA

Rasmus Højlund struck a dramatic stoppage-time penalty as 10-man Napoli edged Genoa 3-2 in a pulsating Serie A encounter, keeping the pressure firmly on league leaders Inter Milan and second-placed AC Milan.

Højlund's decisive moment came in the fifth minute of added time, when his low spot kick slipped under the arm of Genoa goalkeeper Justin Bijlow, who got a hand to the ball but could not prevent it from crossing the line. The penalty was awarded after a VAR review ruled that substitute Maxwel Cornet had clipped Antonio Vergara inside the box.

The Danish forward's second goal of the night moved Napoli to within one point of AC Milan and six adrift of Inter, though both Milan clubs have a game in hand.

"We showed we are a team that never gives up, even in difficult situations and despite

being outnumbered," Napoli coach Antonio Conte said. "I'm proud of the players' attitude. The victory was deserved."

Napoli's night began disastrously. Just seconds into the match, goalkeeper Alex Meret brought down Vitinha after a misplaced back pass from Alessandro Buongiorno, conceding a penalty that Ruslan Malinovskyi converted in the second minute.

The visitors responded swiftly. Scott McTominay was central to Napoli's turnaround, forcing a save from Bijlow in the 20th minute before Højlund slotted home the rebound. A minute later, McTominay himself thundered a long-range effort to put Napoli 2-1 ahead.

However, Napoli suffered a blow at halftime when McTominay was forced off with a muscular issue. Another defensive lapse from Buongiorno allowed Lorenzo Colombo to equalise for Genoa in the 57th minute.

Things worsened for Napoli when centre-back Juan Jesus was sent off in the 76th minute after receiving a second yellow card. Genoa pressed for a winner, but it was Napoli who had the final say.

"The penalty wasn't perfect. I was lucky," Højlund admitted. "But what matters is that we won."

Elsewhere, Fiorentina missed a chance to climb out of the relegation zone as Guillermo Maripán's 94th-minute header salvaged a 2-2 draw for Torino, while Juventus announced a contract extension for Kenan Yildiz until 2030.

ISL: Tough to catch up with teams that have a head start: Chennaiyin FC coach

CHENNAI

Under normal circumstances, Chennaiyin FC would, by this time of the year, be fine-tuning its plans for a push towards Indian Super League playoff qualification. This season, however, has been anything but normal, with uncertainty clouding Indian football for months and the ISL kick-off delayed deep into February.

With the league finally scheduled to begin on February 14, Chennaiyin head coach Clifford Miranda admitted to a sense of relief after weeks of anxious waiting. "We would rather have a delayed start to the league than have no league at all. All of us have to adapt," said Miranda, Chennaiyin's first permanent Indian head coach.

While welcoming clarity on the immediate future of the competition, Miranda conceded that the delayed start has left some clubs at a disadvantage. Chennaiyin resumed training only two weeks ago, in contrast to several teams that have enjoyed uninterrupted preparation.

"Primarily, our objectives will depend on the preparation we have for the season," Miranda said. "Four or five clubs have been training year-round, so it is not a level-playing field. It will be tough to catch up with teams that already have a head start."

Gyökeres lifts Arsenal nine clear as Man United pile pressure on Tottenham boss Frank

LONDON

Arsenal surged nine points clear at the top of the Premier League after a comfortable 3-0 win over Sunderland, while Tottenham head coach Thomas Frank faced growing scrutiny following a damaging 2-0 defeat at Manchester United.

Mikel Arteta's side took control at the Emirates Stadium late in the first half when Martin Zubimendi fired past goalkeeper Robin Roefs at the near post in the 42nd minute. The Gunners, brimming with confidence, tightened their grip after the break through Viktor Gyökeres, who struck in the 66th minute before adding another in stoppage time to seal a commanding victory.

Arsenal, chasing their first English league title in 22 years and their first major trophy since the 2020 FA Cup, appear well placed after years of near misses. Having finished runners-up in three successive seasons — including surrendering sizeable leads in 2023 and 2024 — the north Londoners finally look ready to end their long wait.

The result followed a midweek win over Chelsea that booked Arsenal a League Cup final date with Manchester City at Wembley on March 22. City, now second, will attempt to cut the gap when they face Liverpool at Anfield on Sunday. "We still have to win many games to achieve what we want," Arteta said. "I'll enjoy a nice dinner tonight and watch the City-Liverpool match tomorrow."

Elsewhere, Aston Villa slipped nine points off the pace after being held 1-1 at Bournemouth. Morgan Rogers gave Villa the lead before Brazilian teenager Rayan scored his first Premier League goal to equalise. Manchester United extended their perfect start under interim manager Michael Carrick to four matches by beating Tottenham 2-0 at Old Trafford. Spurs' woes deepened when captain Cristian Romero was sent off in the 29th minute for a reckless challenge on Casemiro. United capitalised through Bryan Mbeumo before Bruno Fernandes sealed the win late on, ending an eight-game winless run against Tottenham.

The defeat left Tottenham languishing 14th, just six points above the relegation zone, with Frank admitting, "We need to deal with it."

Elsewhere, Chelsea cruised past Wolves, West Ham boosted their survival hopes at Burnley, Brentford stunned Newcastle, and Everton edged Fulham in a dramatic weekend of Premier League action.

Ronaldo rift sparks massive £1.2m-a-week Salah move talk

LONDON

Cristiano Ronaldo's growing rift with the Saudi Pro League hierarchy has reportedly opened the door for a sensational move for Liverpool star Mohamed Salah, with Saudi officials preparing a staggering £1.2 million-per-week offer.

Ronaldo is understood to be unhappy with how the Public Investment Fund (PIF) distributes resources among its clubs, believing Al-Nassr has been sidelined, especially after Karim Benzema's switch from Al-Ittihad to Al-Hilal. With the 41-year-old no longer viewed as a long-term investment, Saudi bosses are reportedly exploring replacements with global appeal.

According to reports, Salah has emerged as the prime target, with the SPL ready to triple his current wages. While Liverpool rejected a Saudi bid in 2023, renewed tensions and Salah's contract situation could make this summer pivotal for his future.

Lindsey Vonn crashes early in Olympic downhill, airlifted off mountain

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO

American ski great Lindsey Vonn suffered a frightening crash early in the women's Olympic downhill on Sunday and was taken off the course by helicopter, casting serious doubt over the future of her storied career.

Racing with a heavily injured left knee, the 41-year-old lost control over the opening traverse after cutting her line too tight. Vonn was spun violently in the air before slamming onto the snow, screaming in pain as she came to rest. Medical personnel rushed to her side and attended to her for several minutes as the race was immediately halted.

Vonn was eventually strapped onto a gurney and airlifted off the mountain by helicopter, with officials yet to provide a detailed medical update. Her family watched on anxiously from the stands, including her father Alan Kildow, who stood motionless as his daughter received treatment.

The crash was a cruel twist for what had been one of the most compelling stories heading into the Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics. Vonn had returned to elite competition last season after nearly six years away, defying expectations despite undergoing a partial titanium knee replacement in her right knee in April 2024.

Her comeback gathered momentum almost instantly. Vonn rose to the top of the World Cup downhill standings and arrived in Cortina as one of the gold medal favourites. That optimism, however, was shaken last week when she crashed in Switzerland, suffering a ruptured ACL along with bone bruising and meniscus damage to her left knee.

Despite those injuries, Vonn chose to compete, determined to chase one final Olympic moment on a course where she enjoyed some of her greatest career successes. Sunday's crash, however, may mark a heartbreaking end to that pursuit.

As the race resumed after the delay, teammate Breezy Johnson held the early lead, but the focus remained firmly on Vonn. Widely regarded as one of the greatest Alpine skiers of all time, her resilience and longevity have defined her career. Now, the skiing world waits anxiously for clarity on her condition — and whether this dramatic fall signals the final chapter of an extraordinary journey.

Qatar International Rally: Abdulaziz Al Kuwari rolls back the years to secure second win

DOHA

Veteran Qatari driver Abdulaziz Al Kuwari produced a stirring performance to end a more than decade-long wait for glory, securing his second victory at the Qatar International Rally, the second round of the 2026 FIA Middle East Rally Championship (MERC).

Driving a Sarrazin Motorsport-run Skoda Fabia RS, Abdulaziz was co-driven by his brother Nasser Al Kuwari, who returned from retirement for a one-off appearance. The sibling duo capitalised on late drama to clinch their first MERC win together since 2012, rekindling memories of Abdulaziz's prime years on the regional rally scene.

For much of the event, held across 12 demanding gravel stages north of Doha, the Al Kuwaris trailed defending champion and runaway leader Nasser Al Attiyah. However, the rally turned decisively after stage nine when Al Attiyah suffered a broken rear-left wheel that caused significant suspension damage to his Autotek Skoda Fabia RS.

Despite attempting roadside repairs and nursing the car back to Lusail on three rotating wheels, Al Attiyah and co-driver Candido Carrera were eventually forced to retire, ending his bid for a 19th Qatar International Rally victory.

From that point on, Abdulaziz and Nasser Al Kuwari drove a measured and error-free rally, safely negotiating the remaining three stages to seal victory with a commanding margin of 5 minutes and 8.8 seconds. Abdulaziz later described the win as deeply emotional, noting it was his first triumph at the event in 14 years and the first time his brother had sat alongside him there. Nasser Al Kuwari, who announced his retirement last year, said the victory made his comeback worthwhile and confirmed it would mark the final rally of his career.

The win also underlined Abdulaziz's enduring pedigree. The 46-year-old has previously competed in World Rally Championship support categories, while rallying runs in the family, with father Sadoon Al Kuwari also a respected former driver.

The next round of the six-leg FIA MERC will be held in Jordan from May 14 to 16.

India-Pakistan T20 World Cup clash back on table as ICC, PCB resume talks

Back-channel negotiations intensify after ICC flags financial risks of Pakistan boycott

DUBAI

The much-anticipated India vs Pakistan match at the ICC T20 World Cup 2026, widely regarded as the tournament's biggest revenue driver, could yet take place, with fresh talks underway between the International Cricket Council (ICC) and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

Pakistan had earlier announced it would boycott the February 15 clash in solidarity with Bangladesh, which was removed from the T20 World Cup. The decision sent shockwaves through the cricketing world, given the fixture's commercial and

broadcast significance. However, according to a report, Pakistan has softened its stance after the ICC warned of potential financial damages if the team fails to honour the fixture.

Sources indicated that several back-channel discussions have already taken place, with the ICC making it clear that PCB's claim of "force majeure" may not hold. In its formal communication, the ICC reportedly told PCB that the situation cited does not automatically qualify under the clause and asked the board to explain what steps it had taken to mitigate the issue.

"The ICC will now engage in a structured manner to solve the problem; there would be dialogue, not confrontation," an official was quoted as saying. Following the ICC's letter, the PCB approached the governing body to initiate further discussions and explore possible resolutions.

In its defence, the PCB cited a February 1 social media post by the Pakistan government, which instructed the team to participate in the T20 World Cup but boycott the India match. The ICC, however, responded that PCB was invoking force majeure "without any further explanation or justification."

Meanwhile, concerns over the wider financial fallout have also emerged. Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) has written to the PCB, urging it to reconsider its decision, warning that the boycott would hurt not just the ICC but host boards as well.

"From ticket demand, it was evident this match would have given a huge economic boost," SLC secretary Bandula Dissanayake said, calling the situation "grim."

In response, the PCB has informed SLC that it will consult the Pakistan government and examine possible options for a U-turn, keeping hopes alive for cricket's most high-profile rivalry to return to the World Cup stage.

Surprised by Wankhede pitch, but confidence never dipped: Axar

MUMBAI

India recover from early collapse as Suryakumar Yadav steers hosts to victory.

India vice-captain Axar Patel admitted the team was taken aback by the nature of the pitch at the usually high-scoring Wankhede Stadium after the hosts suffered a top-order collapse in their T20 World Cup opener against the USA.

Put in to bat, India found themselves in deep trouble at 77/6 as the Mumbai surface showed unexpected grip and uneven bounce. However, skipper Suryakumar Yadav's sublime unbeaten 84 off 49 balls rescued the innings and carried India to a competitive 161/9, a total that proved well beyond the USA, who were restricted to 132/8, handing the hosts a 29-run win.

Speaking after the match, Axar said the team needed a few overs to reassess conditions. "Generally, the wicket in Mumbai is flat. We took about three overs to determine what would be a good score," he said, adding that the dressing room remained calm despite the collapse.

"The confidence in the group is such that we knew even if one batter gets going, we could reach around 140-150. The wicket was behaving differently, and that surprised us," Axar said.

The all-rounder acknowledged there was some pressure in the camp, especially given India's history of early batting failures in major tournaments. "Obviously, you feel that. But it's good that it happened in the first match. Now we have a better understanding of the wicket," he said.

Axar stressed the importance of adapting shot selection to conditions while maintaining an attacking mindset. "You have to change your style looking at the wicket, but still play positive cricket. You can't just defend or look for singles," he explained.

Revealing his partnership plan with Suryakumar, Axar said the idea was to bat deep. "We had no batters left. We wanted to stick around for two or three overs and then accelerate," he said. Praising the captain, Axar added that Suryakumar's form and clarity stood out. "The player he is, once he gets going, you know what can happen. He showed that in a big match today."

Gambhir doffs hat to Suryakumar's 'masterclass' after India's gritty win

MUMBAI

India head coach Gautam Gambhir heaped praise on skipper Suryakumar Yadav for his match-winning unbeaten 84 against the USA, calling it a "masterclass" and one of the finest T20I innings played under pressure, as India opened their ICC T20 World Cup 2026 campaign with a hard-fought 29-run victory.

India were staring at trouble after slipping to 77 for six on a challenging Wankhede surface, but Suryakumar led from the front, first steadying the innings and then launching a late assault to lift the hosts to a competitive 161 for nine. His knock, laced with inventive stroke play and fearless power-hitting, turned the game decisively in India's favour.

"It was a good result to start with, and Surya — that was a masterclass, outstanding," Gambhir said. "It was one of the best T20I innings played under pressure."

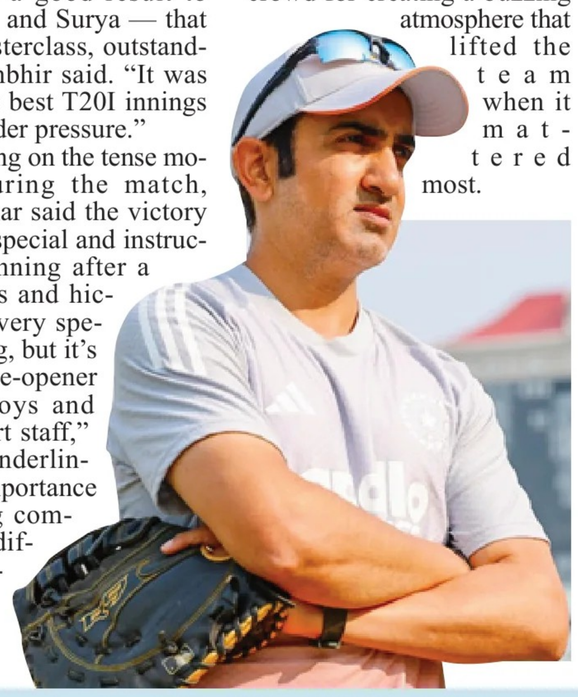
Reflecting on the tense moments during the match, Suryakumar said the victory was both special and instructive. "Winning after a few scares and hiccups is a very special feeling, but it's also an eye-opener for the boys and the support staff," he said, underlining the importance of staying composed in difficult situations.

The Indian captain stitched a crucial 41-run seventh-wicket partnership with Axar Patel before unleashing his trademark 360-degree game. Two sixes and two fours in the final over ensured India crossed the 160 mark, which proved more than enough.

With the ball, Mohammed Siraj led the charge with figures of 3/29, while Arshdeep Singh and Axar claimed two wickets apiece as India strangled the USA chase to 132/8.

Despite the win, Suryakumar stressed the need for honest self-assessment. "It was a difficult wicket, but we can't brush everything under the carpet. We have to understand how we could have batted better," he said.

Captaining India at his home ground, the skipper described the Wankhede experience as special, crediting the crowd for creating a buzzing atmosphere that lifted the team when it mattered most.



Unplanned return turns magical as Siraj answers India's SOS in Mumbai

ICC T20 WC: Siraj cancels Spanish sojourn after last-minute call-up

MUMBAI

Mohammed Siraj was preparing for a much-needed break — and a long-awaited trip to Spain to watch his favourite football club Real Madrid in action — when an unexpected phone call changed everything. On the other end was India skipper Suryakumar Yadav, delivering news Siraj initially struggled to believe.

With pacer Harshit Rana ruled out due to injury and Jasprit Bumrah unavailable because of illness, India needed a replacement at short notice for their T20 World Cup opener against the USA. Suryakumar turned to Siraj, the seasoned fast bowler known for his relentless work ethic, asking him to pack his bags and rush to Mumbai.

"At first I thought Surya bhai was joking," Siraj said after the match. "I told him, 'Don't joke like this, it's not going to happen.' But he said he was serious and told me to get ready."

The official confirmation soon followed from selector Pragyan Ojha, and Siraj's holiday plans were shelved without hesitation. Drafted straight into the playing eleven, the Hyderabad pacer made an immediate impact, finishing with a three-wicket haul that played a crucial role in India's 29-run win over a spirited USA side.

Siraj admitted the call-up felt surreal, especially since he was not originally part of India's T20 World Cup plans. "It felt like a dream when I was on the flight. I had not thought about playing in the World Cup," he said.

Having recently played two demanding Ranji Trophy matches, Siraj had planned February as a recovery phase, followed by the Real Madrid game on February 15 and then Ramzan. Even when India's strength and conditioning coach Adrian Le Roux had asked about his plans, Siraj had indicated he needed rest.

"The planning was going on for the last one year, and I knew I wasn't in the scheme of things," Siraj said. "But whatever the almighty has written, no one can change that."

A member of India's victorious 2024 T20 World Cup campaign in Barbados, Siraj once again proved that when opportunity knocks — even at the eleventh hour — he is always ready to answer, anytime and anywhere.

Meghana, 8 months pregnant, wins medals at Asian Shooting Ch'ship

CHENNAI

Sport occasionally delivers stories that transcend results, and Bengaluru rifle shooter Meghana Sajjanar has authored one such moment at the Asian Shooting Championship in New Delhi. Eight months into her pregnancy, the 32-year-old produced a stirring performance to win an individual bronze and a team gold in the women's 10m air rifle event at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range.

Competing against some of Asia's finest, Meghana showcased remarkable mental strength and composure to stay in contention through the eight-shooter final. While Elavenil Valarivan clinched the gold, it was Meghana's

calm shot-making under pressure that drew admiration, as she finished third after standing for over an hour during the qualification round.

Her effort resonated far beyond the range. Olympic medallist PV Sindhu took to social media to laud Meghana's courage. "Eight months pregnant and still stepping onto the range to win a bronze medal… you remind us that strength comes in many forms," Sindhu wrote, calling her performance deeply inspiring.

Meghana has represented India since 2017 but often found herself in the background amid intense internal competition. The past year, however, has marked a turning point. Even during early pregnancy, she claimed her maiden individual World Cup bronze in Ningbo, China, signalling a rise in confidence and consistency.

DAVIS CUP

Nagal goes down but Suresh keeps India in contest

BENGALURU

The Davis Cup qualifiers between India and the Netherlands at the SM Krishna Stadium delivered high drama, with contrasting fortunes for the hosts. While India's top singles player Sumit Nagal suffered a narrow defeat, Dhakshineswar Suresh produced a composed performance to level the tie and keep India firmly in contention.

The day began on a difficult note for the hosts as Dutchman Guy Den Ouden stunned Nagal with a blistering start. Displaying powerful groundstrokes, a booming serve and aggressive court positioning, Ouden raced through the first set 6-0, leaving the Indian struggling to find rhythm.

Nagal responded admirably in the second set, lifting his movement and timing to dictate play. After missing three break-point chances, he finally converted his fourth, attacking Ouden's second serve to draw a volley error. That breakthrough proved decisive as Nagal wrapped up the set 6-4, restoring parity and drawing loud support from the Bengaluru crowd.

The decider, however, tilted back in the Dutchman's favour. Although Nagal fought back from 0-3 to 3-4, Ouden held his nerve in the key moments, mixing serve-and-volley play effectively to close out the match 6-0, 4-6, 6-4 and hand the Netherlands an early lead.

India found immediate relief in the second singles match as 25-year-old Dhakshineswar Suresh rose to the occasion against Netherlands No.1 and world No.88 Jesper de Jong. Armed with a big serve and sharp movement, the Madurai-born player dictated proceedings, exploiting de Jong's inconsistent service games.

The match, completed in under an hour, saw Suresh vary his pace and placement intelligently. The second set was closely fought, with de Jong pushing several games to deuce, but Suresh struck late, breaking for a 6-5 lead before serving out the contest confidently. He sealed victory on his second match point with a powerful forehand, drawing India level in the tie.

Reflecting on his loss, Nagal admitted he could have handled the third set better. "I'm a little disappointed with my third set. Ouden played two unbelievable shots at crucial moments, and when you do that, you deserve to win," he said.

Mud and Muscle in the City of Moksha

VARANASI

In a city celebrated for its pursuit of transcendence, Varanasi's akharas tell a more grounded story — one of mud, muscle and discipline. Tucked away behind temples and lanes echoing with chants, these centuries-old wrestling pits remain deeply physical spaces, where sacred earth shapes modern ambition.

Revered as much for tradition as for training, Varanasi's akharas have quietly produced national and international wrestlers. Saurabh Yadav's gold at the U17 National Wrestling Championship 2025 and Jaiveer's triumph at the Third Youth Asian Games in Bahrain are recent reminders that the city's influence extends far beyond its ghats.

Their success has sparked a ripple effect. Shopkeepers, mechanics, students and security guards now commit to rigorous akhara routines alongside day jobs, no longer training merely to uphold tradition but to compete. "Very few visitors know that Varanasi's akharas have been shaping national and international players for years," says Arun Kumar Singh, manager of a heritage property located near several akharas.

Women, too, are steadily reclaiming space in arenas long dominated by men. Under-15 national gold medallist Palak Yadav, who grew up around dangals, trains with clear international ambitions. While she also practices on professional mats, she insists the akhara remains central to her development. The same ethos guides wrestlers like Gaurishankar Pahalwan, an international freestyle gold medallist who began training in the pits decades ago. A clerk by profession, he still earns from competitive dangals.

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